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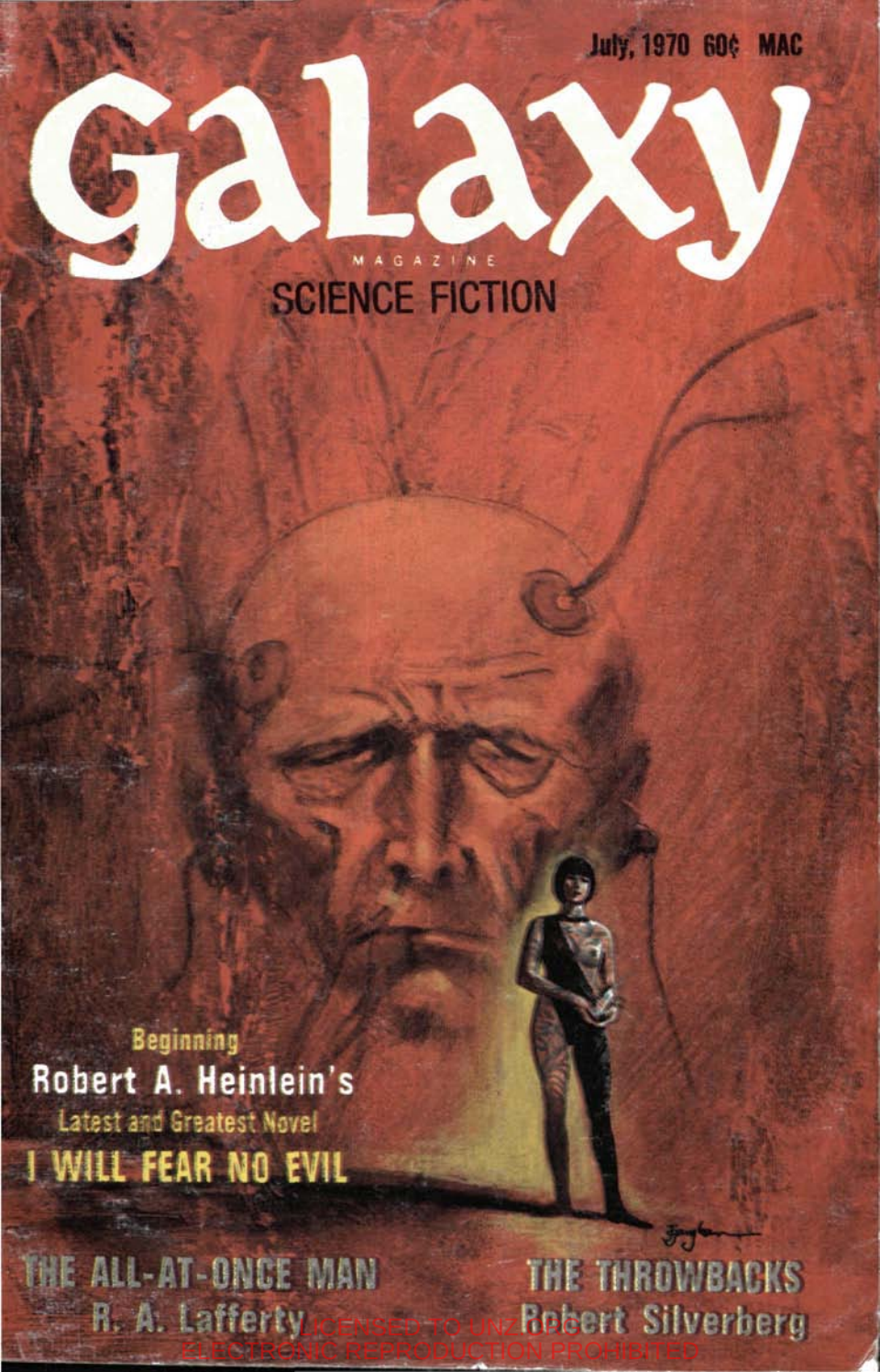

Beginning

Robert A. Heinlein's

Latest and Greatest Novel

I WILL FEAR NO EVIL

THE ALL-AT-ONCE MAN

R. A. Lafferty

THE THROWBACKS

Robert Silverberg

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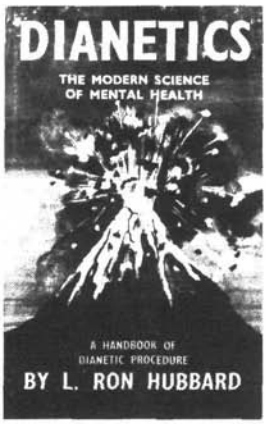
Whatever happened to DIANETICS?



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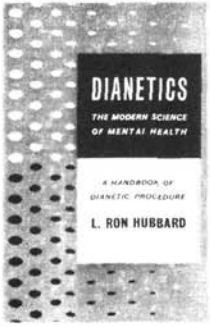

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ALL STORIES NEW

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ASBESTOS, TOO

If society persists in its present course the future holds great peril, whether from the uncontrolled effects of technology itself or from an unreasoned political reaction against technological innovation—a reaction that could condemn mankind to poverty, frustration and the loss of freedom . . .

The above is the conclusion reached by a panel convened by the National Academy of Sciences to assess the effects of technology on the condition of Earth and Man. The report, published in *Scientific American*, February 1970, noted in passing that "Asbestos is so diversely useful that it has found its way into every automobile, train, airplane, factory and home and thence into human lungs, where, remaining as indestructible as it is in nature, it can cause grave disease."

Some of the yodels against ecological damage caused by technological evolution—by persons who have just now looked up the definitions of the words—do have an asbestos rasp and suggest serious illness. Coast to coast, demonstrations have urged unlikely if not impossible reversals in the condition of Man. Some featured sledgehammer assaults on unmanned automobiles—first pollutingly driven to the scene. Others launched indiscriminate broadsides at electric and other industries without which modern man—and the demonstrators themselves—would probably refuse to survive.

Back-to-nature proposals tend to run out of steam—perhaps because we are part of nature. The artificial *homo sapiens* is an invention still waiting to happen—a creation of philosophers and fictioneers. Animals and predators we are—so ruthless that we have in fact become our own most dangerous environment.

For those who prefer a long-term and more more constructive attack on the very real problems confronting us, this issue of *GALAXY* brings two views of Man's possible ecological future.

One is Robert Silverberg's novelette, THE THROWBACKS (page 26). CONTAINERS FOR THE CONDITION OF MAN (page 65) covers a recent exhibit in Washington, D.C. under sponsorship of the Department of Urban Housing and Development and the Prudential Insurance Company.

The exhibit, titled "The Architectural Vision of Paolo Soleri," attracted major attention in leading architectural journals as well as mass media—and the remarkable thing is that Messrs. Silverberg and Soleri, working independently and unaware of each other, reached similar visions of human tomorrows.

Both men see an erect society, single-structure cities towering tall as the mountains, freeing the rest of the global surface to wilderness and agriculture and providing Technological Man with all his needs and wants. Silverberg, pessimistically, sees a society so tightly organized that it's impossible for any human to say no to another—and proper punishment is given those who do.

Soleri's view is sunnier—perhaps as befits a man working with structural materials. Neither Silverberg nor Soleri pretends to present final answers to Man's future on Earth—each inde-

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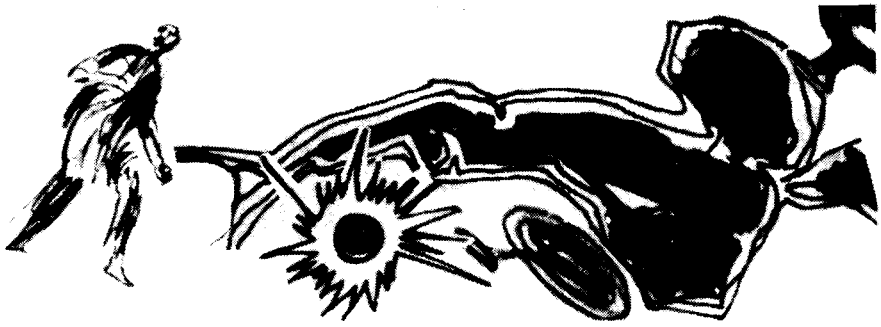

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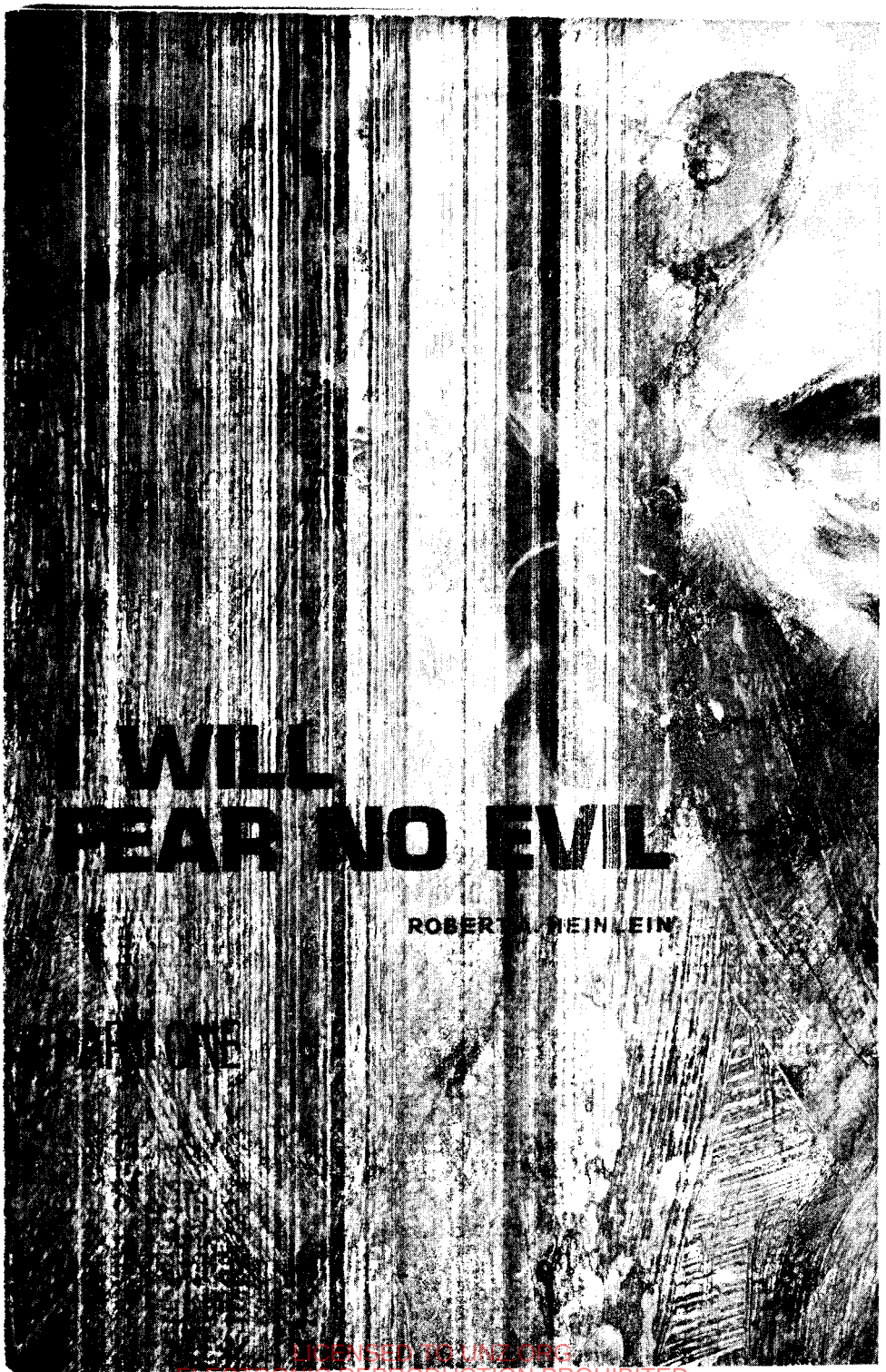

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I

THE room was old-fashioned, 1980 baroque, but it was wide, long, high, and luxurious. Near simulated view windows stood an automated hospital bed. It looked out of place but was largely concealed by a magnificent Chinese screen. Forty feet from it a boardroom table also failed to match the décor. At the head of this table was a life-support wheelchair; wires and tubings ran from it to the bed.

Near the wheelchair, at a mobile stenodesk crowded with directional mikes, voice typewriter, clock-calendar, controls, and the usual ancillaries, a young woman sat. She was beautiful.

Her manner was that of the perfect unobtrusive secretary but she was dressed in a current exotic mode, "Half & Half"—right shoulder and breast and arm concealed in jet-black knit, left leg sheathed in a scarlet tight, panty-ruffle in both colors joining them, black sandal on the scarlet side, red sandal on her bare right foot. Her skin paint was patterned in the same scarlet and black.

On the other side of the wheelchair was an older woman garbed in a nurse's conventional white pantyhose and smock. She ignored everything but her dials and a patient in the chair. Seated around the table were a dozen-odd men, most of them in spectator-sports style affected by older executives.

Cradled in the life-support chair was a very old man. Except for restless eyes, he looked like a poor job of embalming. No cosmetic help had been used to soften the brutal fact of his decrepitude.

"Ghoul," he was saying softly to a man halfway down the table. "You're a slavering ghoul, Parky, me boy. Didn't your father teach you that it is polite to wait for a man to stop kicking before you bury him? Or did you have a father? Erase that last, Eunice. Gentlemen, Mr. Parkinson has moved that I be invited to resign as chairman of the board. Do I hear a second?"

He waited, looking from face to face, then said, "Oh, come now! Who is letting you down, Parky? You, George?"

"I had nothing to do with it."

"*But you would love to vote* 'Aye.' Motion fails for want of a second."

"I withdraw my motion."

"Too late, Parkinson. Erasures are made only by unanimous consent, implied or overt. One objection is enough—and I, Johann Sebastian Bach Smith, do so object . . . and that rule controls because *I* wrote it before you learned to read.

"But—" Smith looked around at the others—"I do have news. As you heard from Mr. Teal, all our divisions are in satisfactory shape; Sea Ranches and General Textbooks are more than satisfactory—so this is a good time for me to retire."

Smith waited, then said, "You can close your mouths. Don't look smug, Parky; I have more news for you. I stay on as chairman of the board but will no longer be chief executive. Our chief counsel, Mr. Jake Salomon, be-

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comes deputy chairman and—"

"Hold it, Johann. I am *not* going to manage this five-ring circus."

"Nobody said you would, Jake. But you can preside at board meetings when I'm not available. Is that too much to ask?"

"Mmm, I suppose not."

"Thank you. I'm resigning as president of Smith Enterprises, and Mr. Byram Teal becomes our president and chief executive officer—he's doing the work; it's time he got the title—and pay and stock options and all the perks and privileges and tax loopholes. No more than fair."

Parkinson said, "Now see here, Smith!"

"Hold it, youngster. Don't start a remark to me with 'Now see here—' Address me as 'Mr. Smith' or 'Mr. Chairman.' What is your point?"

Parkinson controlled himself, then said, "Very well, *Mister* Smith. I can't accept this. Quite aside from promoting your assistant to the office of president in one jump—utterly unheard of—if there is a change in management, *I* must be considered. I represent the second largest block of voting stock."

"I did consider you for president, Parky."

"You did?"

"Yep. I thought about it . . . and snickered."

"Why, you—"

"Don't say it—I might sue. What you forget is that *my* block has voting control. Now about your block— By company policy anyone representing five percent or more of voting stock is automatically on the board even if nobody loves him and he suffers from spiritual bad breath. Which describes both you and me.

"Or did describe you. Byram, what's the late word on proxies and stock purchases?"

"A full report, Mr. Smith?"

"No, just tell Mr. Parkinson where he stands."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Parkinson, you now control less than five percent of the voting stock."

Smith added sweetly, "So you're fired, you young ghoul. Jake, call a special stockholders meeting, legal notice, all formalities, for the purpose of giving Parky a gold watch and kicking him out—and electing his successor. Further business? None. Meeting's adjourned. Stick around, Jake. You, too, Eunice. And Byram, if you have anything on your mind."

Parkinson jumped to his feet. "Smith, you haven't heard the last of this!"

"Oh, no doubt," the old man said sweetly. "Meantime, my respects to your mother-in-law and tell her that Byram will go on making her rich even though I've fired you."

PARKINSON left abruptly. Others started to leave. Smith said mildly, "Jake, how does a man get to be fifty years old without acquiring horse sense? Only smart thing that lad ever did was pick a rich mother-in-law. Yes, Hans?"

"Johann," Hans von Ritter said, leaning on the table and speaking directly to the chairman, "I did

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not like your treatment of Parkinson."

"Thanks. You're honest with me to my face. Scarce these days."

"Removing him from the board is okay; he's an obstructionist. But there was no need to humiliate him."

"I suppose not. One of my little pleasures, Hans. I don't have many these days."

A Simplex footman rolled in, hung the vacated chairs on a rack, rolled out; von Ritter continued: "*I* have no intention of being treated that way. If you want nothing but yes-men on your board, let us note that I control much less than five percent of the voting stock. Do you want my resignation?"

"Good God, no! I need you, Hans—and Byram will need you still more. I can't use trained seals; a man has to have the guts to disagree with me or he's a waste of space. But when a man bucks me, I want him to do it *intelligently*. You do. You've forced me to change my mind several times—not easy, stubborn as I am. Now about this other—sit down. Eunice, whistle up that easy chair for Dr. von Ritter."

The chair approached; von Ritter waved it back, it retreated. "No, I haven't time to be cajoled. What do you want?" He straightened up; the boardroom table folded its legs, turned on edge and glided away through a slot in the wall.

"Hans, I've surrounded myself with men who don't like me, not a yes-man or a trained seal among them. Even Byram—especially Byram—got his job by contradicting me and being right. Except when he's been wrong and that's why he needs men like you on the board. But Parkinson— I was entitled to clip him—publicly—because he called for my resignation—publicly. Nevertheless you are right, Hans; tit for tat is childish. Twenty years ago—even ten—I would *never* have humiliated a man. If a man operates by reflex, as most do instead of using their noggins, humiliating him forces him to try to get even. I know better. But I'm getting senile, as we all know."

Von Ritter said nothing. Smith went on, "Will you stick? And help keep Byram steady?"

"Uh . . . I'll stick. As long as you behave yourself." He turned to leave.

"Fair enough. Hans? Will you dance at my wake?"

Von Ritter looked back and grinned. "I'd be delighted!"

"Thought so. Thanks, Hans. G'bye."

Smith said to Byram Teal, "Anything, son?"

"Assistant Attorney General coming from Washington tomorrow to talk to you about our Machine Tools Division buying control of Homecrafts, Ltd. I think—"

"To talk to *you*. If you can't handle him I picked the wrong man. What else?"

"At Sea Ranch number five we lost a man at the fifty-fathom line. Shark."

"Married?"

"No, sir. Nor dependent parents."

"Well, do the pretty thing, whatever it is. You have those video-

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spools of me, the ones that actor fellow dubbed the sincere voice onto. When we lose one of our own we can't have the public thinking we don't give a hoot."

Jake Salomon added, "Especially when we don't."

Smith clucked at him. "Jake, do you have a way to look into my heart? It's our policy to be lavish with death benefits, plus the little things that mean so much."

"—and look so good. Johann, you don't have a heart—just dials and machinery. Furthermore, you never did have."

Smith smiled. "Jake, for you we'll make an exception. When you die, we'll try not to notice. No flowers, not even the customary black-bordered page in our house organs."

"You won't have anything to say about it, Johann. I'll outlive you twenty years."

"Going to dance at my wake?"

"I don't dance," the lawyer answered, "but you tempt me to learn."

"Don't bother, I'll outlive you. Want to bet? Say a million to your favorite tax deduction? No, I can't bet; I need your help to stay alive. Byram, check with me tomorrow. Nurse, leave us. I want to talk with my lawyer."

"No, sir. Dr. Garcia wants a close watch on you at all times."

Smith looked thoughtful. "Miss Bedpan, I acquired my speech habits before the Supreme Court took up writing dirty words on sidewalks. But I will try to use words plain enough for you to understand. I am your employer. I pay your wages. This is my home. I told you to get out. That's an order."

The nurse looked stubborn, said nothing.

Smith sighed. "Jake, I'm getting old—I forget that they follow their own rules. Will you locate Dr. Garcia—somewhere in the house—and find out how you and I can have a private conference in spite of this too-faithful watch dog?"

Shortly Dr. Garcia arrived, looked over dials and patient, conceded that telemetering would do for the time being. "Miss MacIntosh, shift to the remote displays."

"Yes, Doctor. Will you send for a nurse to relieve me? I want to quit this assignment."

"Now, Nurse—"

"Just a moment, Doctor," Smith put in. "Miss MacIntosh, I apologize for calling you 'Miss Bedpan.' Childish of me, another sign of increasing senility. But, Doctor, if she *must* leave—I hope she won't—bill me for a thousand-dollar bonus for her. Her attention to duty has been perfect . . . despite many instances of unreasonable behavior on my part."

"Uh—see me outside, Nurse."

WHEN doctor and nurse had left Salomon said dryly, "Johann, you are senile only when it suits you."

Smith chuckled. "I do take advantage of age and illness. What other weapons have I left?"

"Money."

"Ah, yes. Without money I wouldn't be alive. But I *am* childishly bad-tempered these days. You could chalk it up to the fact that a man who has always been ac-

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tive feels frustrated by being imprisoned. But it's simpler to call it senility . . . since God and my doctor know that my body is senile."

"I call it stinking bad temper, Johann, not senility—since you can control it when you want to. Don't use it on me; I won't stand for it."

Smith chuckled. "Never, Jake; I need you. Even more than I need Eunice—though she's ever so much prettier than you. How about it, Eunice? Has my behavior been bad lately?"

His secretary shrugged—producing complex secondary motions pleasant to see. "You're pretty stinky at times, Boss. But I've learned to ignore it."

"You see, Jake? If Eunice refused to put up with it—as you do—I'd be the sweetest boss in the land. As it is, I use her as a safety valve."

Salomon said, "Eunice, any time you get fed up with this vile-tempered old wreck you can work for me, at the same salary or higher."

"Eunice, your salary just doubled!"

"Thank you, Boss;" she said promptly. "I've recorded it. And the time. I'll notify accounting."

Smith cackled. "See why I keep her? Don't try to outbid me, you old goat. You don't have enough chips."

"Senile," Salomon growled. "Speaking of money, whom do you want to put into Parkinson's slot?"

"No rush, he was a blank file. Do you have a candidate, Jake?"

"No. Although after this last little charade it occurs to me that Eunice might be a good bet."

Eunice looked startled, then dropped all expression. Smith looked thoughtful. "It had *not* occurred to me. But it might be a perfect solution. Eunice, would you be willing to be a director of the senior corporation?"

Eunice flipped her machine to "Not Recording." "You're both making fun of me! Stop it."

"My dear," Smith said gently, "you know I don't joke about money. As for Jake, it is the only subject sacred to him—he sold his daughter and his grandmother down to Rio."

"Not my daughter," Salomon objected. "Just grandmother . . . and the old girl didn't fetch much. But it gave us a spare bedroom."

"But, Boss, I don't know anything about running a business!"

"You wouldn't have to. Directors don't manage, they set policy. But you *do* know more about running it than most of our directors; you've been on the inside for years. Plus almost inside during the time you were my secretary's secretary before Mrs. Bierman retired. But here are advantages I see in what may have been a playful suggestion on Jake's part. You are already an officer of the corporation as Special Assistant Secretary assigned to record for the Board—and I made you that, you'll both remember, to shut up Parkinson when he belly-ached about my secretary's being present during an executive session. You'll go on being that—and my personal secretary, too; can't spare you—while becoming a director. No

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conflict—you'll simply vote as well as recording. Now we come to the key question: Are you willing to vote the way Jake votes?"

She looked solemn. "You wish me to, sir?"

"Or the way I do if I'm present, which comes to the same thing. Think back and you'll see that Jake and I have *always* voted the same way on basic policy—settling it ahead of time—while wrangling and voting against each other on things that don't matter. Read the old minutes, you'll spot it."

"I noticed it long ago," she said simply, "but didn't think it was my place to comment."

"Jake, she's our new director. One more point, my dear: If it turns out that we need your spot, will you resign? You won't lose by it."

"Of course, sir. I don't have to be paid to agree to that."

"You still won't lose by it. I feel better. Eunice, I've had to turn management over to Teal; I'll be turning policy over to Jake—you know the shape I'm in. I want Jake to have as many sure votes backing him as possible. Oh, we can always fire directors . . . but it is best not to have to do so, a fact von Ritter rubbed my nose in. Okay, you're a director. We'll formalize it at that stockholders meeting. Welcome to the ranks of the Establishment. Instead of a wage slave, you have sold out and are now a counter-revolutionary, warmongering, rat-fink, fascist dog. How does it feel?"

"NOT 'dog,' " Eunice objected. "The rest is lovely but dog is the wrong sex. I'm female. A bitch."

"Eunice, I not only do not use such words with ladies around, you know that I do not care to hear them from ladies."

"Can a rat-fink fascist be a lady? Boss, I learned that word in kindergarten. Nobody minds it today."

"I learned it out behind the barn and let's keep it there."

Salomon growled, "I don't have time to listen to amateur lexicologists. Is the conference over?"

"What? Not at all! Now comes the top-secret part, the reason I sent the nurse out. So gather ye round."

"Johann, before you talk secrets; let me ask one question. Does that bed have a mike on it? Your chair may be bugged, too."

"Eh?" The old man looked thoughtful. "I used a call button . . . until they started standing a heel-and-toe watch on me."

"Seven to two you're bugged. Eunice my dear, can you trace the circuits and make sure?"

"Uh . . . I doubt it. The circuitry isn't much like my stenodesk. But I'll look." Eunice left her desk, studied the console on the back of the wheel-chair. "These two dials almost certainly have mikes hooked to them; they're respiration and heart beat. But they don't show voices—my voice does not make the needles jiggle. Filtered out, I suppose. But—" she looked thoughtful—"voice could be pulled off either circuit ahead of a filter. I do something like that, in reverse, whenever I record with a high background db. I

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don't know what these other dials do. Darn it, I might spot a voice circuit . . . but I could never be sure that there was *not* one. Or two. Or three. I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry, dear," the lawyer said soothingly. "There hasn't been real privacy in this country since the middle of the twentieth century—why, I could phone a man I know of and have you photographed in your bath and you would never know it."

"Really? What a dreadful idea. How much does this person charge for such a job?"

"Plenty. Depends on difficulty and how much chance he runs of being prosecuted. Never less than a couple of thousand and then up like a kite. But he can do it."

"Well!" Eunice looked thoughtful, then smiled. "Mr. Salomon, if you ever decide that you must have a picture of me, phone me for a competitive bid. My husband has an excellent Chinese camera and I would rather have *him* photograph me in my bath than some stranger."

"Order, please," Smith said mildly. "Eunice, if you want to sell skin pictures to that old lecher, do it on your own time. I don't know anything about these gadgets but I know how to solve this. Eunice, go out to where they telemeter me—I think it's next door in what used to be my upstairs lounge. You'll find Miss MacIntosh there. Hang around three minutes. I'll wait two minutes, then I'll call out: 'Miss MacIntosh! Is Mrs. Branca there?' If you hear me, we'll know she's snooping. If you don't, come back at the end of three minutes."

"Yes, sir. Do I give Miss MacIntosh any reason for this?"

"Give the old battle-axe any stall you like. I simply want to know if she is eavesdropping."

"Yes, sir." Eunice started to leave the room. She pressed the door switch just as its buzzer sounded. The door snapped aside, revealing Miss MacIntosh, who jumped in surprise.

The nurse recovered and said bleakly to Mr. Smith, "May I come in for a moment?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you, sir." The nurse went to the bed, pulled its screen aside, touched four switches on its console, replaced the screen. Then she planted herself in front of her patient and said, "Now you have complete privacy, so far as *my* equipment is concerned. Sir."

"Thank you."

"I am not supposed to cut the voice monitors except on doctor's orders. But you had privacy *anyhow*. I am as bound to respect a patient's privacy as a doctor is. I *never* listen to sickroom conversation. I don't even hear it! Sir."

"Get your feathers down. If you weren't listening, how did you know we were discussing the matter?"

"Oh! Because my name was mentioned. Hearing my name triggers me to listen. It's a conditioned reflex. Though I don't suppose you believe me."

"On the contrary, I do. Nurse—please switch on whatever you switched off. Then bear in mind that I *must* talk privately and I'll remember not to mention your name. But I'm glad to know that

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I can reach you so promptly. To a man in my condition that is a comfort."

"Uh—very well, sir."

"And I want to thank you for putting up with my quirks. And bad temper."

She almost smiled. "Oh, you're not so difficult, sir. I once put in two years in an N.P. hospital."

Smith looked startled, then grinned. "*Touché*! Was that where you acquired your hatred for bedpans?"

"It was indeed. Now if you will excuse me, sir—"

When she was gone, Salomon said, "You really think she won't listen?"

"Of course she will, she can't help it, she's already triggered and will be trying too hard not to listen. But she's proud, Jake, and I would rather depend on pride than gadgetry. Okay, I'm getting tired, so here it is in a lump. I want to buy a body. A young one."

EUNICE BRANCA barely showed reaction. Jake Salomon's features dropped into the mask he used for poker and district attorneys. Presently Eunice said, "Am I to record, sir?"

"No. Oh, hell, yes. Tell that sewing machine to make one copy for each of us and wipe the tape. File mine in my destruct file; file yours in your destruct file—and, Jake, hide your copy in the file you use to outwit the Infernal Revenue Service."

"I'll file it in the still safer place I use for guilty clients. Johann, anything you say to me is privileged but I am bound to point out

Ballantine Books

IT IS June and science fiction is proliferating away at the Milford Workshop and in other enlightened courses and areas all around the country. Summertime in hardcover publishing, traditionally a lazy, easy time, is a period of frenzied activity for paperbounders. The catalog for Fall was all done by the end of May. Now comes the time when the books which were a gleam in someone's eye a month ago have to be translated into a reality—or the catalog becomes a wicked lie. This year is particularly frenzied because of the high immediacy quotient in many of the environmental books we are doing. It is with a sigh of relief that one can turn to something staid, steady and reliable, like s.f.

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(INCIDENTALLY, how reassuring that the D.A.R. disapproves of this environmental flap—we must be on the right track. Not that we are fanatic. Anybody who wants to is welcome to believe it's all a Marxian plot to divert attention from American high living. Ourselves, we simply believe its high time folks get their sexual kicks from sex and not from big cars, TV sets, and electric toothbrushes . . .)

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RIGHT ON. Okay, its Clark Ashton Smith this month, in a volume titled ZOTHIQUE—he of the prose of decadent iridescence, just to prove that not all Adult Fantasy is fun and fairies . . . It's rich stuff, vivid and powerful, with a great cover by George Barr. And this month it's DAY MILLION, by Frederik Pohl—a varied group of the master's later short stories to celebrate the reissue of three earlier collections, also available this month—THE CASE AGAINST TOMORROW (**aha**!), THE MAN WHO ATE THE WORLD (how prophetic can you get?) and DIGITS AND DASTARDS (the answers are all in the numbers, right?). And this month, a newcomer to the fold—R.W. Mackelworth. His first novel, a strangely haunting tale of the remnants of life surviving in a world of deathly cold, living on dreams of "the warm." Remember that theory about the polar icecaps and a pull on the Earth's floating crust? Or alternatively a shift in the axis? It could lead to a lot of excitement—and does, in TILTANGLE.

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MEANWHILE, back at the plant, the motto for the month is GARBAGE IS GOLD. No pun intended. We'll almost certainly be doing a book about garbage—but that's a goodie to come.

BB

that the Canons forbid me to advise a client in how to break the law, or to permit a client to discuss such intention. As for Eunice, anything you say to her or in her presence is *not* privileged."

"Oh, come off it, you old shyster; you've advised me in how to break the law twice a week for years. As for Eunice, nobody can get anything out of her short of all-out brainwash."

"I didn't say I always followed the Canons; I merely told you what they called for. I won't deny that my professional ethics have a little stretch in them—but I won't be party to anything smelling of bodysnatching, kidnapping, or congress with slavery. Any self-respecting prostitute—meaning me—has limits."

"Spare me the sermon, Jake; what I want is both moral and ethical. I need your help to see that all of it is legal—utterly legal, can't cut corners on this—and practical."

"I hope so."

"I know so. I said I wanted to *buy* a body—legally. That rules out bodysnatching, kidnapping, and slavery. I want to make a legal purchase."

"You can't."

"Why not? Take this body," Smith said, pointing to his chest. "It's not worth much even as manure; nevertheless I can will it to a medical school. You know I can. You okayed it."

"Oh. Let's get our terms straight. In the United States there can be no chattel ownership of a human being. Thirteenth Amendment. Therefore your body is not your

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property because you can't sell it. But a cadaver *is* property—usually of the estate of the deceased . . . although a cadaver is not often treated the way other chattels are treated. But it is indeed property. If you want to buy a cadaver, it can be arranged—but whom were you calling a ghoul earlier?"

"What is a cadaver, Jake?"

"Eh? A dead body, usually of a human. So says Webster. The legal definition is more complicated but comes to the same thing."

"It's that 'more complicated' aspect I'm getting at. Okay, once it is dead, it is property and maybe we can buy it. But what is 'death,' Jake, and when does it take place? Never mind Webster; what is the *law*?"

"Oh. Law is what the Supreme Court says it is. Fortunately this point was nailed down in the 'seventies—Estate of Henry M. Parsons vs. Rhode Island. For years, many centuries, a man was dead when his heart quit beating. Then, for about a century, he was dead when a licensed M.D. examined him for heart action and respiration and certified that he was dead—and sometimes that turned out grisly, as doctors do make mistakes. And then along came the first heart transplant and oh, mother, what a legal snarl *that* stirred up!

"But the Parsons case settled it—a man is dead when all brain activity has stopped, permanently."

"And what does that mean?" Smith persisted.

"The court declined to define it. But in application—look, Johann, I'm a corporation lawyer, not a specialist in medical jurisprudence nor in forensic medicine—and I would have to research before I—"

"Okay, so you're not God. You can revise your remarks later. What do you know *now*?"

"When the exact moment of death is important, as it sometimes is in estate cases, as it often is in accident, manslaughter and murder cases, as it always is in an organ transplant case, some doctor determines that the brain has quit and isn't going to start up again. They use various tests and talk about 'irreversible coma' and 'complete absence of brain wave activity' and 'cortical damage beyond possibility of repair—' but it all comes down to some M.D. laying his reputation and license on the line to certify that this brain is dead and won't come alive again. Heart and lungs are now irrelevant. They are classed with hands and feet and gonads and other parts that a man can do without or have replaced. It's the brain that counts. Plus a doctor's opinion about that brain. In transplant cases there are almost always at least two doctors in no way connected with the operation and probably a coroner as well. Not because the Supreme Court requires it—in fact only a few of the fifty-four states have legislated in re thanatotic requirements—but—"

"Just a moment, Mr. Salomon—that odd word. My typewriter has placed a query after it." Eunice kept her hand over the "Hold" light.

"How did your typer spell it?"

"T-H-A-N-A-T-O-T-I-C."

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"Smart machine. It's the technical adjective referring to death. From the Greek god Thanatos, Death."

"Half a second while I tell it so." Eunice touched the "Memory" switch with her other hand, whispered briefly, then said, "It feels better if I reassure it at once. Go ahead." She lifted her hand from the "Hold" light.

"Eunice, are you under the impression that that machine is alive?"

SHE blushed, then touched "Erase" and covered "Hold." "No, Mr. Salomon. But it does behave better with me than with any other operator. It can get downright sulky if it doesn't like the way it is handled."

"I can testify to that," Smith agreed. "If Eunice takes a day off, her relief had better fetch her own gadgets or fall back on shorthand. Listen, dear, knock off the chatter. Talk with Jake about the care and feeding of machines some other time; great-grandfather wants to go to bed."

"Yes, sir." She lifted her hand.

"Johann, I was saying that in transplant cases the medical profession has set up tight rules or customs, both to protect themselves from criminal and civil actions and also, I am sure, to forestall restrictive legislation. They have to get that heart out while it's still alive and nevertheless protect themselves from indictments for murder, cum multimillion-dollar damage suits. So they spread the responsibility thin and back each other up."

"Yes," agreed Smith. "Jake, you haven't told me a thing I didn't know—but you have relieved my mind by confirming facts and law. Now I *know* it can be done. Okay, I want a healthy body between ages twenty and forty, still warm, heart still working and no other damage too difficult to repair . . . but with the brain legally dead, dead, *dead*. I want to buy that cadaver and have *this* brain —mine—transplanted into it."

Eunice held perfectly still. Jake blinked. "When do you want this body? Later today?"

"Oh, next Wednesday ought to be soon enough. Garcia says he can keep me going."

"I suggest later today. And get you a new brain at the same time—that one has quit functioning."

"Knock it off, Jake; I'm serious. My body is falling to pieces. But my mind is clear and my memory isn't bad—ask me yesterday's closing prices on every stock we are interested in. I can still do logarithmic calculations without tables; I check myself every day. Because I *know* how far gone I am. Look at me—worth so many megabucks that it's silly to count them. But with a body held together with Scotch tape and string—I ought to be in a museum.

"Now, all my life I've heard 'You can't take it with you.' Well, eight months ago when they tied me down with all this undignified plumbing and wiring, having nothing better to do I started thinking about that old saw. I decided that, if I couldn't take it with me, I wasn't going to go!"

"Humph! 'You'll go when the wagon comes.' "

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"Perhaps. But I'm going to spend as much as necessary of that silly stack of dollars to try to beat the game. Will you help?"

"Johann, if you were talking about a routine heart transplant, I would say Good luck and God bless you! But a *brain* transplant —have you any idea what that entails?"

"No, and neither do you. But I know more about it than *you* do— I've had endless time to read up. No need to tell me that no successful transplant of a human brain has ever been made; I know it. No need to tell me that the Chinese have tried it several times and failed—although they have three basket cases still alive if my informants are correct."

"Do you want to be a basket case?"

"No. But there are two chimpanzees climbing trees and eating bananas this very day—and each has the brain the other one started with."

"Oho! That Australian."

"Dr. Lindsay Boyle. He's the surgeon I must have."

"Boyle. There was a scandal, wasn't there? They ran him out of Australia."

"So they did, Jake. Ever hear of professional jealousy? Most neurosurgeons are wedded to the notion that a brain transplant is too complicated. But if you dig into it you will find the same opinions expressed fifty years ago about heart transplants. If you ask neurosurgeons about those chimpanzees, the kindest thing any of them will say is that it's a fake—even though there are motion pictures of both operations. Or they talk about the many failures Boyle had *before* he learned how. Jake, they hate him so much they ran him out of his home country when he was about to try it on a human being. Why, those bastards —excuse me, Eunice."

"My machine is instructed to spell that word as 'scoundrel'."

"Thank you, Eunice."

"Where is he now, Johann?"

"In Buenos Aires."

"Can you travel that far?"

"Oh, no! Well, perhaps I could, in a plane big enough for these mechanical monstrosities they use to keep me alive. But first we need that body. And the best possible medical center for computer-assisted surgery. And a support team of surgeons. And all the rest. Say Johns Hopkins. Or Stanford Medical Center."

"I venture to say that neither one will permit this unfrocked surgeon to operate."

"Jake, Jake, of course they will. Don't you know how to bribe a university?"

"I've never tried it."

YOU do it with really *big* chunks of money, openly, with an academic procession to give it dignity. But first you find out what they want—football stands, or a particle accelerator, or an endowed chair. But the key is plenty of money. From my point of view it is better to be alive and young again, and broke, than it is to be the richest corpse in Forest Lawn." Smith smiled. "It would be exhilarating to be young—and broke. So don't spare the shekels.

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"I know you can set it up for Boyle; it's just a question of whom to bribe and how—in the words of Bill Gresham, a man I knew a long time ago: 'Find out what he wants—he'll geek!'

"But the toughest problem involves no bribery but simply a willingness to spend money. Locating that warm body. Jake, in this country over ninety thousand people per year are killed in traffic accidents alone—call it two hundred and fifty each day—and a lot of those victims die of skull injuries. A fair percentage are between twenty and forty years old and in good health aside from a broken skull and a ruined brain. The problem is to find one while the body is still alive, then keep it alive and rush it to surgery."

"With wives and relatives and cops and lawyers chasing along behind."

"Certainly. If money and organization weren't used beforehand. Finders' fees—call them something else. Life-support teams and copters equipped for them always standing by, near the worst concentrations of dangerous traffic. Contributions to highway patrol relief funds, thousands of release forms ready to sign, lavish payment to the estate of the deceased—oh, at least a million dollars. Oh, yes, nearly forgot—I've got an odd blood type and any transplant is more likely to take if they don't have to fiddle with swapping blood. There are only about a million people in this country with blood matching mine. Not an impossible number when you cut it down still further by age span—twenty to forty—and good health. Call it three hundred thousand, tops. Jake, if we ran big newspaper ads and bought prime time on video, how many people could we flush out of the bushes? If we dangled a million dollars as bait? One megabuck in escrow with Chase Manhattan Bank for the estate of the accident victim whose body is used? With a retainer to any prospective donor and his spouse who will sign up in advance."

"Johann, I'm durned if I know. But I would hate to be married to a woman who could collect a million dollars by 'accidentally' hitting me in the head with a hammer."

"Details, Jake. Write it so that no one can murder and benefit by it—and suicide must be excluded, too; I don't want blood on my hands. The real problem is to locate healthy young people who have my blood type, and feed their names and addresses into a computer."

"Excuse me, Mr. Smith, but have you thought of consulting the Rare Blood Club?"

"Be darned! I *am* growing senile. No, I hadn't, Eunice—and how do you happen to know about it?"

"I'm a member, sir."

"Then you're a donor, dear?" Smith sounded pleased and impressed.

"Yes, sir. Type AB-Negative."

"Be darned twice. Used to be a donor myself—until they told me I was too old, long before you were born. And your type—AB-Negative."

"I thought you must be, sir,

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when you mentioned the number. So small. Only about a third of one percent of us in the population. My husband is AB-Negative, too, and a donor. You see—well, I met Joe early one morning when we were both called to give blood to a new-born and its mother."

"Well, hooray for Joe Branca! I knew he was smart—he grabbed you, didn't he? I had not known that he was an Angel of Mercy as well. Tell you what, dear—when you get home tonight, tell Joe that all he has to do is to dive into a dry swimming pool . . . and you'll be not only the prettiest widow in town—but the richest."

"Boss, you have a nasty sense of humor. I wouldn't swap Joe for any million dollars—money won't keep you warm on a cold night."

"As I know to my sorrow, dear. Jake, can my will be broken?"

"Any will can be broken. But I don't think yours will be. I tried to build fail-safes into it."

"Suppose I make a new will along the same general lines but with some changes—would it stand up?"

"No."

"Why not?"

YOU said it yourself. Senility. Any time a rich man dies at an advanced age with a new will anyone with an interest in breaking it—your granddaughters, I mean—will try to break it, alleging senility and undue influence. I think they would succeed."

"Darn. I want to put Eunice down for a million so she won't be tempted to kill her AB-Negative husband."

"Boss, you're making fun of me again. Nasty fun."

"Eunice, I told you that I do not joke about money. How do we handle it, Jake? Since I'm too senile to make a will."

"Well, the simplest way would be an insurance policy with a paid-up single premium . . . which would cost, in view of your age and health, slightly more than a million, I surmise. But she would get it even if your will was broken."

"Mr. Salomon, don't listen—"

"Johann, do you want that million to revert to you if by any long chance you outlive Eunice?"

"Mmm . . . no, if it did, a judge might decide to look at the matter—and God himself doesn't know what a judge will do these days. Make the Red Cross the residuary. No, make it the Rare Blood Club."

"Very well."

"Get it paid up first thing in the morning. No, do it tonight; I may not live till morning. Get an underwriter—Jack Towers, maybe—get Jefferson Billings to open that pawnshop of his and get a certified check. Use my power of attorney, not your own money, or you might be stuck for it. Get the signature of a responsible officer of the insurance company, then you can go to bed."

"Yes, Great Spirit. I'll vary that; I'm a better lawyer than you are. But the policy will be in force before night—with *your* money, not mine. Eunice, be careful not to kick those hoses and wires as you go out. But tomorrow you needn't be careful—as long as you don't get caught."

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She sniffed. "You each have a nasty sense of humor. Boss, I'm going to erase this. I don't *want* a million dollars. Not from Joe dying, not from you dying."

"If you don't want it, Eunice," her employer said gently, "you can step aside and let the Rare Blood Club have it."

"Uh . . . Mr. Salomon, is that correct?"

"Yes, Eunice. But money is nice to have, especially when you don't have it. Your husband might be annoyed if you turned down a million dollars."

"Uh—" Mrs. Branca shut up.

"Take care of it, Jake. While thinking about how to buy a warm body. And how to get Boyle here and get him whatever permission he needs to do surgery in this country. And so forth. And tell—no, I'll tell her. Miss MacIntosh!"

"Yes, Mr. Smith?" came a voice from the bed console.

"Get your team in; I want to go to bed."

"Yes, sir. I'll tell Dr. Garcia."

Jake stood up. "Good day, Johann. You're a crazy fool."

"Probably. But I do have fun with my money."

"So you do. Eunice, may I run you home?"

"Oh, no, sir, thank you. My Gadabout is in the basement."

"Eunice," said her boss, "can't you see that the old goat *wants* to take you home? So be gracious. One of my guards will take your Gadabout home."

"Uh . . . thank you, Mr. Salomon. I accept. Get a good night's sleep, Boss." They started to leave.

"Wait, Eunice," Smith commanded. "Hold that pose. Jake, pipe those gams! Eunice, that's obsolete slang meaning that you have pretty legs."

"So you have told me before, sir—and so my husband often tells me. Boss, you're a dirty old man."

He cackled. "So I am, my dear . . . and have been since I was six, I'm happy to say."

MR. SALOMON helped her into her cloak, rode down with her to the basement, waved his guards aside and handed her into his car. Shotgun locked them in, got in by driver-guard and locked that compartment. As she sat down Mrs. Branca said, "Oh, how *big*! Mr. Salomon, I knew a Rolls was roomy—but I've never been in one before."

"A Rolls only by courtesy, my dear—body by Skoda, power plant by Imperial Atomics, then Rolls-Royce pretties it and backs it with their reputation and service. You should have seen a Rolls fifty years ago, before gasoline engines were outlawed. There was a dream car!"

"This one is dreamy enough. Why, my little Gadabout would fit inside this compartment."

A voice from the ceiling said, "Orders, sir?"

Mr. Salomon touched a switch. "One moment, Rockford." He lifted his hand. "Where do you live, Eunice? Or the coordinates of wherever you want to go?"

"Oh. I'll go home. North one one eight, west thirty-seven, then up to level nineteen—though I

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doubt that this enormous car will fit into the vehicle lift."

"If not, Rocky and his partner will escort you up the passenger lift and to your door."

"That's nice. Joe doesn't want me to ride passenger lifts by myself."

"Joe is right. So we'll deliver you like a courier letter. Eunice, are you in a hurry?"

"Me? Joe expects me when I get there, Mr. Smith's working hours being so irregular now. Today I'm quite early."

"Good." Mr. Salomon again touched the intercom switch. "Rockford, we're going to kill some time. Uh, Mrs. Branca, what zone for those coordinates? Eighteen something?"

"Nineteen-B, sir."

"Find a cruising circle near nineteen-B; I'll give you coordinates later."

"Very good, sir."

Salomon went on to Eunice. "This compartment is soundproof unless I thumb this switch; they can't hear us. Which is good as I want to discuss things with you and make phone calls about that insurance policy."

"Oh? Surely that was a joke."

"Joke, eh? Mrs. Branca, I have been working for Johann Smith for twenty-six years, the last fifteen with his affairs as my sole practice. Today he made me de facto chairman of his industrial empire. Yet if I failed to carry out his orders about that insurance policy—tomorrow I would be out of a job."

"Oh, surely not! He depends on you."

"He depends on me as long as he can depend on me and not one minute longer. That policy must be written tonight. I thought you had quit fretting when you learned that you could step aside for the Rare Blood Club?"

"Well, yes. Except that I'm afraid I might get greedy and take it. When the time comes."

"And why not? The Rare Blood Club has done nothing for him; you have done much."

"I'm well paid."

"Listen, you silly child, don't be a silly child. He wanted *you* to have a million dollars in his will. And he wanted you to know it so that he could enjoy seeing your face. I pointed out that it is too late to change his will. Even this insurance gimmick is chancy if his natural heirs get a look at the books and discover it—which I shall try to prevent—as a judge might decide it was just a dodge—as it is—and require the insurance company to pay it to his estate. Which is where the Rare Blood Club comes in handy; they would probably fight it and win, if you cut them in for half.

"But there are other ways. Suppose you knew nothing about this and were invited to the reading of his will and discovered that your deceased employer had bequeathed you a lifetime income 'in grateful appreciation of long and faithful service.' Would you turn it down?"

"Uh—" she said, and stopped.

" 'Uh,' " he repeated. "Exactly, 'Uh.' Of course you wouldn't turn it down. He'd be gone and you'd be out of a job and there would be no reason to refuse it. So, instead of a lump sum so big it embar-

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rasses you, I'm going to write a policy that sets up a trust to pay you an annuity." He paused to think. "A safe return, after taxes, on a trust is about four percent. What would you say to around seven hundred and fifty a week? Would that upset you?"

"Well . . . no. I understand seven hundred and fifty dollars much better than I understand a million."

"The beauty of it is that we can use the principal to insure against inflation—and you can still leave that million, or more, to the Rare Blood Club when your own Black Camel kneels."

"Really? How wonderful! I never will understand high finance."

"That's because most people think of money as something to pay the rent. But a money man thinks of money in terms of what he can do with it. Never mind, I'll fix it so that all you need do is spend it. I'll use a Canadian insurance company and a Canadian bank, as each will be stuffy about letting a U.S. Court look at its records. In case his granddaughters find out what I've done, I mean."

"Oh. Mr. Salomon, shouldn't this money go to them?"

"Again, don't be silly. They are harpies. Snapping turtles. And had nothing to do with making this money. Do you know anything about Johann's family? Outlived three wives—and his fourth married him for his money and it cost him millions to get shut of her. His first wife gave him a son and died in doing so—then Johann's son was killed trying to capture a worthless hill. Two more wives, two divorces, a daughter by each of those two wives, resulting in a total of four granddaughters—and those ex-wives and their daughters are all dead, and their four carnivorous descendants have been waiting for Johann to die and are sore at him because he hasn't."

Salomon grinned. "They're in for a shock. I wrote his will so as to give them small lifetime incomes—and chop them off with a nominal dollar if they contest. Now excuse me. I must make phone calls, then take you home and run over to Canada and nail this down."

"Yes, sir. Do you mind if I take off my cloak? It's rather warm."

"Want the cooling turned up?"

"Only if you are too warm. But this cloak is heavier than it looks."

"I noticed it was heavy. Body armor?"

"Yes. sir. I'm out by myself quite a lot."

"No wonder you're too warm. Take it off. Take off anything you wish to."

She grinned at him. "I wonder if you are a dirty old man, too. For another million?"

"Not a durned dime! Shut up, child, and let me phone."

"Yes, sir." Mrs. Branca wiggled out of her cloak, then raised the leg rest on her side, stretched out, and relaxed.

SUCH a strange day . . . am I really going to be rich? Doesn't seem real . . . well, I'm not going to spend a dime—or let Joe spend it—unless it's safe in the bank . . . learned that the hard way first year

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we were married . . . some men understand money—such as Mr. Salomon, or Boss—and some don't, such as Joe . . . but as sweet a husband as a girl could wish . . . as long as I never again let him share a joint account . . .

Dear Joe! Those *are* pretty gams if you do say so as shouldn't, you bitch. 'Bitch—' how quaint Boss is with his old-fashioned taboos . . . always necessary not to shock him—not too much, that is; Boss enjoys a slight flavor of shock, like a whiff of garlic . . . especially necessary not to annoy him with language everybody uses nowadays . . . Joe is good for a girl, never have to be careful around him . . . except about money . . .

Wonder what Joe would think if he could see me locked in this luxurious vault with this old goat . . . probably be amused but best not to tell him, dearie; men's minds don't work the way ours do, men are not logical . . . wrong to think of Mr. Salomon as an 'old goat' though; he certainly has not acted like one . . . you had to reach for that provocative remark, didn't you, dear? Just to see what he would say . . . and found out! Got squelched—

Is he too old? Hell, no, dear, the way they hike 'em up with hormones a man is never too old until he's too feeble to move . . . the way Boss is . . . not that Boss ever made the faintest pass even years back when he was still in fair shape . . .

Does Boss really expect to regain his youth by transplanting his brain? Arms and legs and kidneys and even hearts, sure, sure—but a brain?

SALOMON switched off the telephone. "Done," he announced. "All but signing papers which I'll do in Toronto this evening."

"I'm sorry to be so much trouble, sir."

"My pleasure."

"I do appreciate it. And I must think about how to thank Boss—didn't thank him today but didn't think he meant it."

"Don't thank him."

"Oh, but I must. But I don't know how. How does one thank a man for a million dollars? And not seem insincere?"

"Hmm! There are ways. But, in this case, don't. My dear, you delighted Johann when you showed no trace of gratitude; I know him. Too many people have thanked him in the past . . . then figured him as an easy mark and tried to bleed him again. Then tried to knife him when he turned out not to be. So don't thank him. Sweet talk he does not believe; he figures it's always aimed at his money. I notice you're spunky with him."

"I have to be, sir, or he tromps on me. He had me in tears a couple of times—years back—before I found out he wanted me to stand up to him."

"You see? The old tyrant is making bets with himself as to whether you'll come trotting in tomorrow and lick his hand like a dog. So don't even mention it. Tell me about yourself, Eunice—age, how long you've been married and how often, number of children,

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childhood diseases, why you aren't on video, what your husband does, how you got to be Johann's secretary, number of arrests and for what—or tell me to go to hell; you are entitled to privacy. But I would like to know you better; we are going to be working together from here on."

"I don't mind answering." (I'll tell just what I want to tell!) "But does this work both ways?" She stopped to let down the leg rest, straightened up. "Do I quiz you the same way?"

He chuckled. "Certainly. I may take the Fifth. Or lie."

"I could lie, too, sir. But I don't need to. I'm twenty-eight and married once and still am. No children—no children yet; I'm licensed for three. As for my job—well, I won a beauty contest at eighteen, the sort that offers a one-year contract making appearances around your home state, plus a video test with an option for a seven-year contract—"

"And they didn't pick up your option. I'm astonished."

"Not that, sir. Instead I took stock of myself—and quit. Winning that state contest and then losing the national contest made me realize how many pretty girls there are. Too many. And some things I heard from them about what you have to go through to get into video and stay there . . . well, I didn't want it that much. And went back to school and took an associate's degree in secretarial electronics, with a minor in computer language and cybernetics, and went looking for a job." (And I'm not going to tell you how I got through school!) "And eventually filled in as Mrs. Bierman's secretary while her regular secretary had a baby . . . then she didn't come back and I stayed on . . . and when Mrs. Bierman retired, Boss let me fill in. And kept me on. So here I am—a very lucky girl."

"A very smart girl. But I'm sure your looks had much to do with Johann's decision to keep you on."

"I know they did," she answered quietly. "But he would not have kept me had I not been able to do his work. I know how I look but I'm not conceited about it; appearance is a matter of heredity."

"So it is," he agreed, "but there are impressive data to show that beautiful women are, on the average, more intelligent than homely ones."

"Oh, I don't think so! Take Mrs. Bierman—downright homely. But she was terribly smart."

"I said on the average," he repeated. "What is beauty? A lady hippopotamus must look beautiful to her boy friend, or we would run out of hippopotamuses—potami—in one generation. What we think of as physical beauty is almost certainly a tag for a complex of useful survival characteristics. Smartness —intelligence —among them. Do you think that a male hippo would think you beautiful?"

She giggled. "Not likely!"

"You see? In reality you're no prettier than a female hippopotamus; you are simply an inherited complex of survival characteristics useful to your species."

"I suppose so." (Humph! Give me one opening and I'll show you what I am.)

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"But since Johann—and I—are of your species, what that means to us is beauty. Which Johann appreciates."

"I KNOW he does," she said quietly. She straightened her scarlet-covered leg in full extension and looked at it. "I dress this way to amuse Boss. When I first went to work for Smith Enterprises I wore as little as the other girls in the outer offices—you know, skin paint and not much else. Then, when I went to work for Mrs. Bierman, I started dressing quite modestly because she did—covered up all over, I mean, like Nurse MacIntosh—not even a see-through. Uncomfortable. I went on dressing that way when Mrs. Bierman left. Until one morning I had only one such outfit—I wore disposables, cheaper than having them cleaned—and spilled coffee down the front and was caught with nothing to wear.

"And no time to buy anything for I was more afraid of being late—you know how impatient Mr. Smith is—than I was that he might disapprove of my dress. Or lack of it. So I gritted my teeth and got out an office-girl bikini and asked Joe to paint me and hurry it up. Joe's an artist, did I say?"

"I don't believe so."

"He is. He does my skin painting, even styles my face. But I was late anyhow that morning as Joe really is an artist and refused to let it go with just spraying me the background color. The two-piecee was white with asorted sizes of big blue polka dots . . . and Joe insisted on continuing the pattern all over me, with me cussing and telling him to hurry and him insisting on painting just one more big polka dot. I was so late that I cut through an Abandoned Area I ordinarily circled around."

"Eunice, you should *never* go into an Abandoned Area. Good God, child, even the police don't risk it other than in a car as well armored as this one. You could be mugged, raped and murdered and no one would ever know."

"Yes, sir. But I was scared of losing my job. I tried to explain to Boss why I was late and he told me to shut up and go to work. Nevertheless, he was unusually mellow that day. The next day I wore the sort of full cover-up I had been wearing—and he was downright mean all day. Mr. Salomon, I don't have to be slapped in the face with a wet fish; from then on I quit trying to look like a nun and dressed and painted to enhance what I've got as effectively as possible."

"It's effective. But, dear, you should be more careful. It's all very well to wear sexy clothes for Johann; that's charity. The old wretch can't get much pleasure out of life and is no threat to you, the shape he is in."

"He never was a threat, sir. In all the years I've worked for Mr. Smith he has never so much as touched my hand. He just makes flattering remarks about each new getup—sometimes quite salty and then I sass him and threaten to tell my husband, which makes him cackle. All innocent as sunday school."

(Please turn to page 105)

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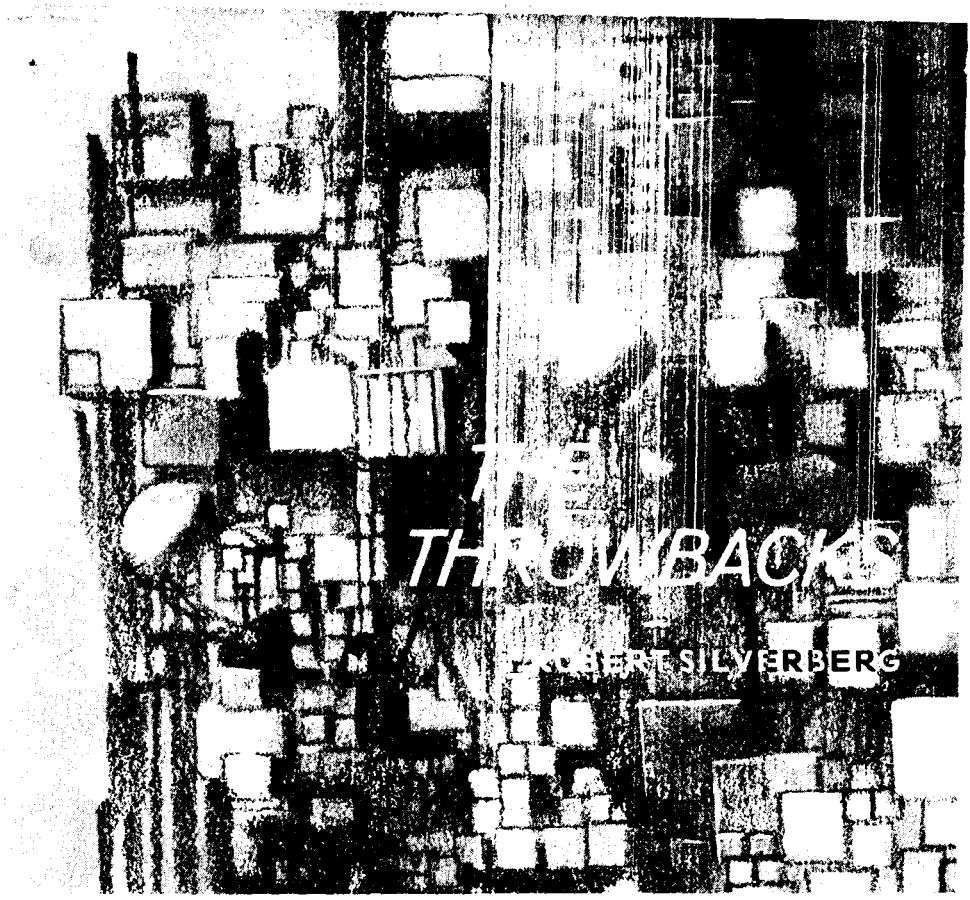

I

JASON QUEVEDO lives in Shanghai, though just barely: his apartment is on the 761st floor, and if he lived only one level lower he would be in Chicago, which is no place for a scholar. His wife Micaela frequently tells him that their lowly status in Shanghai is a direct reflection of the quality of his work. Micaela is the sort of wife who often says things like that.

Jason spends most of his working time down in Pittsburgh, where the archives are. He is a historian and needs to consult the documents, the records of how it used to be. He does his research in a clammy little cubicle on the urbmon's 185th floor, almost in the middle of Pittsburgh. He does not really have to work down there, since anything in the archives can easily be piped up to the data terminal in his own apartment. But he feels it is a matter of professional pride to have an office where he can file and arrange and handle the source materials. He

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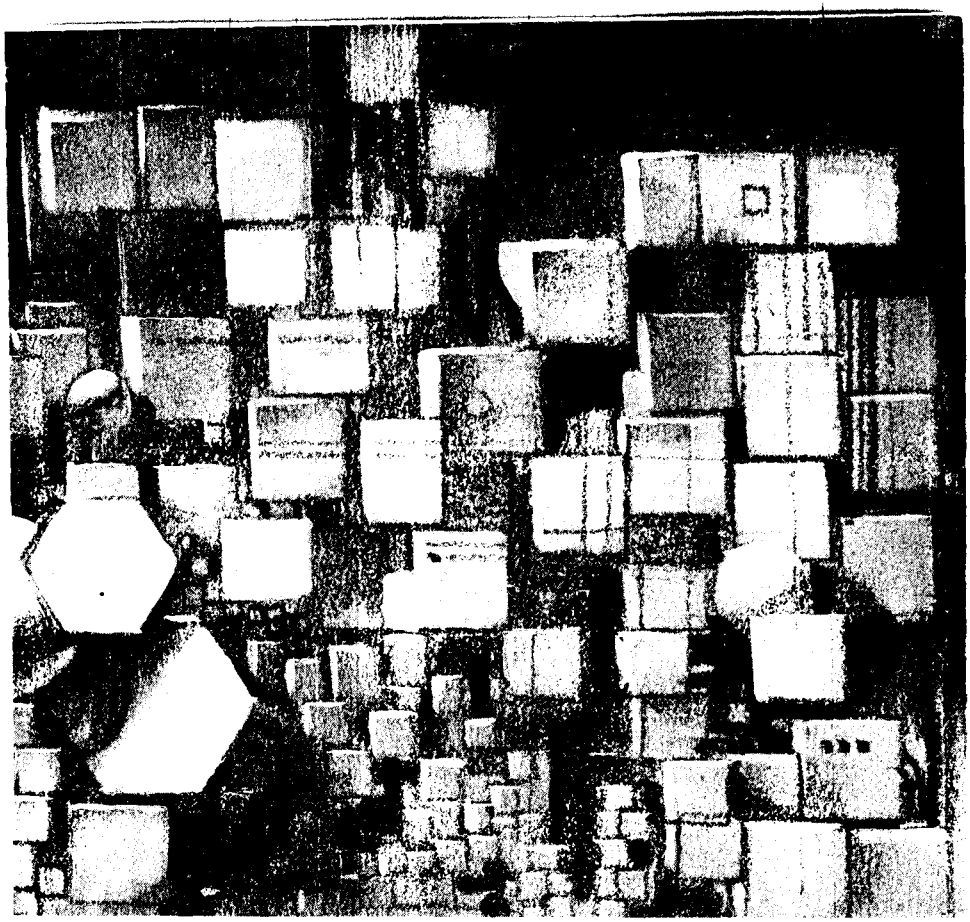

said as much when he was pulling strings to have the office assigned to him: "The task of recreating previous eras is a delicate and complex one, which must be performed under optimal circumstances, or—"

The truth is that if he didn't escape from Micaela and their five littles every day, he'd go flippo. That is, accumulated frustration and humiliation would cause him to commit nonsocial acts, perhaps violent ones. He is aware that there is no room for the nonsocial person in an urban monad. When more than 800,000 people live under the same roof, absolute social harmony is essential. He knows that if he loses his temper and behaves in a seriously unblessworthy way they simply throw him down the chute and turn his mass into energy. So he is careful.

He is a short, soft-spoken man with mild green eyes and thinning sandy hair. "Your meek exterior is deceptive," lovely Mamelon Kluver told him throatily at a party last summer. "Your type is like

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a sleeping volcano. You explode suddenly, astonishingly, passionately." He thinks she may be right. He fears the possibilities.

He has been desperately in love with Mamelon Kluver for perhaps the last three years, and certainly since the night of that party. He has never dared to touch her. Mamelon's husband is the celebrated Siegmund Kluver, who though not yet fifteen is universally recognized as one of the urbmon's future leaders. Jason is not afraid that Siegmund would object. In an urban monad, naturally, no man has a right to withhold his wife from anyone who desires her. Nor is Jason afraid of what Micaela would say. He knows his privileges. He is simply afraid of Mamelon. And perhaps of himself.

For ref. only. Urbmon sex mores.

Univ. sex. accessibility. Trace decline of proprietary marriage, end of adultery concept. Nightwalkers: when first socially acceptable? Limit of allowable frustration: how determined? Sex as panacea. Sex as compensation for lessened quality of life under urbmon conditions. Query: was quality of life really lessened by triumph of urbmon system? (Careful—beware the chute!) Separation of sex & procreation. Value of max. interchange of partners in high-density culture. Problem: what is still forbidden (anything?) Examine taboo on extracity nightwalking. How powerful? How widely observed? Check effects of univ. permiss. on comtemp. fiction. Loss of dramatic tension? Erosion of raw material of narr. conflict? Query: is urbmon moral struc. amoral, postmoral, pre-, im-?

JASON dictates such memoranda whenever and wherever some new structural hypothesis enters his mind. These are thoughts that come to him during a nightwalking excursion on the 155th floor, in Tokyo. He is with a thickset young brunette named Gretl when the sequence of ideas arrives. He has been fondling her for some minutes and she is panting, ready, her hips pumping, her eyes narrowed to steamy slits.

"Excuse me," he says and reaches across her heavy quivering breasts for a stylus. "I have to write something down." He activates the data terminal's input screen and punches the button that will relay a printout of his memorandum to his desk at his research cubicle in Pittsburgh. Then, quickly pursing his lips and scowling, he begins to make his notations.

He frequently goes nightwalking but never in his own city of Shanghai. Jason's one audacity: boldly he flouts the tradition that one should stay close to home during one's nocturnal prowls. No one will punish him for his unconventional behavior, since it is merely a violation of accepted custom, not of urban law. No one will even criticize him to his face for doing it. Yet his wanderings give him the mild thrill of the forbidden. Jason explains his habit to himself by saying that he prefers the crosscul-

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tural enrichment that comes from sleeping with women of other cities. Privately he suspects that he is just uneasy about getting mixed up with women he knows, such as Mamelon Kluver. Especially Mamelon Kluver.

So on his nightwalking nights he takes the dropshafts far into the depths of the building, to such cities as Pittsburgh or Tokyo, even to squalid Prague or grubby Reykjavik. He pushes open strange doors, lockless by statute, and takes his place on the sleeping platforms of unknown women smelling of mysterious lower-class vegetables. By law they must embrace him willingly. "I am from Shanghai," he tells them, and they go, "Ooooh!" in awe and he mounts them tigerishly, contemptuously, swollen with status.

Breasty Gretl waits patiently while Jason records his latest notions. Then he turns toward her again. Her husband, bloated on whatever the local equivalent of tingle or mindblot may be, lies belly-up at the far side of the sleeping platform, ignoring them. Gretl's large dark eyes glow with admiration. "You Shanghai boys sure got brains," she says as Jason pounces and takes her in a single fierce act.

Later he returns to the 761st floor. Wraiths flit through the dim corridors: other citizens of Shanghai, back from their own nightwalking rounds. He enters his apartment. Jason has forty-five square meters of floor space, not really enough for a man with a wife and five littles, but he does not complain. God bless, you take what you get; others have less. Micaela is asleep, or pretends to be. She is a long-legged, tawny-skinned woman of twenty-three, still quite attractive, though quirky lines are beginning to appear in her face. She frowns too much. She lies half uncovered, her long black glossy hair spread out wildly around her. Her breasts are small but perfect; Jason compares them favorably to the udders of Tokyo's Gretl. He and Micaela have been married nine years. Once he loved her a great deal—before he discovered the gritty residue of bitter shrewishness at the bottom of her soul.

She smiles an inward smile, stirs, still sleeping, brushes her hair back from her eyes. She has the look of a woman who has just had a thoroughly satisfactory sexual experience. Jason has no way of knowing whether some nightwalker visited Micaela tonight while he was gone and, of course, he cannot ask. (Search for evidence? Stains on the sleeping platform? Stickiness on her thighs? Don't be barbaric!) He suspects that even if no one had come to her tonight, she would try to make him think that someone had; and if someone had come and had given her only modest pleasure, she would nevertheless smile for her husband's benefit as though she has been embraced by Zeus. He knows his wife's style.

The children seem peaceful. They range in age from two to eight. Soon he and Micaela will have to think about having anoth-

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er. Five littles is a fair-sized family but Jason understands his duty to serve life by creating life. When one ceases to grow, one begins to die; it is true of a human being and also of the population of an urban monad, of an urbmon constellation, of a continent, of a world. God is life and life is god.

He lies down beside his wife.

He sleeps.

He dreams that Micaela has been sentenced to the chute for countersocial behavior.

Down she goes! Mamelon Kluver makes a condolence call. "Poor Jason," she murmurs. Her pale skin is cool against him. The musky fragrance of her. The elegance of her features. The look of total mastery of self. Not even seventeen; how can she be so imperiously complete? "Help me dispose of Siegmund and we'll belong to each other," Mamelon says. Eyes bright, mischievous, goading him to be her creature. "Jason," she whispers. "Jason, Jason, Jason." Her tone a caress. Her hands on him. He wakes, trembling, sweating, horrified, half an inch from messy ecstasy. He sits up and goes through one of the forgiveness modes for improper thoughts.

God bless, he thinks, *god bless, god bless, god bless. I did not mean such things. It was my mind. My monstrous mind free of shackles.* He completes the spiritual exercise and lies down once more. He sleeps and dreams harmlessly.

IN THE morning the littles run madly off to school and Jason prepares to go to his office. Micaela says suddenly, "Isn't it interesting that you go six hundred floors down when you go to work, and Siegmund Kluver goes up on top, to Louisville?"

"What the god bless do you mean by that?"

"I see symbolic meaning in it."

"Symbolic garbage. Siegmund's in urban administration—he goes up where the administrators are. I'm in history—I go down where the history is. So?"

"Wouldn't you like to live in Louisville some day?"

"No."

"Why don't you have any ambition?"

"Is your life so miserable here?" he asks, holding himself tensely in check.

"Why has Siegmund made so much of himself at the age of fourteen or fifteen and here you are at twenty-six and you're still just an input-pusher?"

"Siegmund is ambitious," Jason replies evenly, "and I'm merely a time-server. I don't deny it. Maybe it's genetic. Siegmund strives and gets away with it. Most men don't. Striving sterilizes, Micaela. Striving is primitive. God bless, what's wrong with my career? What's wrong with living in Shanghai?"

"One floor lower and we'd be living in—"

"—Chicago," he says. "I know. But we aren't. May I go to my office now?"

He leaves. He wonders whether he ought to send Micaela to the consoler's office for a reality ad-

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justment. Her threshold of thwarting-acceptance has dipped alarmingly of late; her expectations-level has risen just as disturbingly. Jason is well aware that such things should be dealt with at once, before they become uncontrollable and lead to countersocial behavior and the chute. Probably Micaela needs the services of the moral engineers. But he puts aside the idea of calling the consoler.

It is because I dislike the idea of having anyone tamper with my wife's mind.

He tells himself this piously and a mocking inner voice tells him that he is taking no action because he secretly wishes to see Micaela become so countersocial that she must be thrown down the chute.

He enters the dropshaft and programs for the 185th floor. Down he goes to Pittsburgh. He sinks, inertia-free, through the cities that make up Urbmon 116. Down he goes through Chicago, through Edinburgh, through Nairobi, through Colombo.

Forty floors constitute one city. The twenty-five cities of Urbmon 116 comprise the successive layers of a single great urban monad, a tower of super-stressed concrete three kilometers high, a self-contained unit housing more than 800,000 human beings. Most cities within the urbmon have between 30,000 and 40,000 people but there are exceptions. Louisville, the high-prestige abode of the urban administrators, is sparsely populated; luxury is the compensation one is given for the burdens of such responsibility. Reykjavik, Warsaw and Prague, the three bottom cities where the maintenance workers and other humble grubbers live, are overpopulated; crowding is considered beneficial there. Everything is conceived for the greater good.

Urbmon 116 looks after itself. Its central service core provides light, fresh air, heating, cooling and other essentials. Central kitchens handle most of the food-processing chores. Below ground level, 400 meters down, is found the utilities substructure: refuse compactors, the plants for the reprocessing of wastes, the heat-sink, the power generators and everything else on which the life of the urbmon depends. Food is the only thing that must come from outside—from the agricultural communes that lie beyond the urban area. Jason's building is one of fifty-odd identical structures making up the Chipitts urban constellation, which in this year of 2382 has a population of close to 41,000,000. There are many other such urban constellations in the world—Boshwash, Sansan, Shankong, Bocarac, Wienbud—and the aggregate human population of Earth has risen well past 75,000,000,000. Because of the new verticality of urban housing patterns, there is ample land for meeting the food requirements of that many people and more.

He feels the comforting solidity of the building about him as he descends. The urbmon is his world. He has never been outside it. Why should he go out? His friends, his family, his whole life, are here.

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His urbmon is adequately supplied with theaters, sports arenas, schools, hospitals, houses of worship. His data terminal gives him access to any work of art that is considered blessworthy for human consumption. No one he knows has ever left the building, except for the people who were chosen by lot to settle in the newly opened Urbmon 158 a few months ago and they, of course, will never come back. There are rumors that urban administrators sometimes go from building to building on business but Jason is not sure that this is true and he does not see why such travel would be necessary or desirable. Are there not systems of instantaneous communication linking the urbmons, capable of transmitting all relevant data?

IT IS a splendid system. As a historian, privileged to explore the records of the pre-urbmon world, he knows more fully than most people how splendid it is. He understands the awful chaos of the past. The terrifying freedoms; the hideous necessity of making choices. The insecurity. The confusion. The lack of plan. The formlessness of contexts.

He reaches the 185th floor. He makes his way through the sleepy corridors of Pittsburgh to his office. A modest room but he loves it. Glistening walls. A wet mural over his desk. The necessary terminals and screens.

Five small glistening cubes lie on his desk. Each holds the contents of several libraries. He has been working with these cubes for two years, now. His theme is *The Urban Monad as Social Evolution: Parameters of the Spirit Defined by Community Structure.* He is attempting to show that the transition to an urbmon society has brought about a fundamental transformation of the human soul. Of the soul of western man, at any rate. An orientalization of the occidentals, as formerly aggressive people accept the yoke of the new environment. A more pliant, more acquiescent mode of response to events; a turning away from the old expansionist-individualist philosophy, as marked by territorial ambition, the *conquistador* mentality and the pioneering way, toward a kind of communal expansionism centered in the orderly and unlimited growth of the human race. Definitely a psychic evolution of some sort, a shift toward graceful acceptance of hive-life. The malcontents bred out of the system generations ago. We who have not gone down the chute accept the inexorabilities. Yes. Yes. Jason believes that he has struck upon a significant subject. Micaela disparaged the theme when he announced it: "You mean you're going to write a book showing that people who live in different kinds of cities are different? That urbmon people have a different attitude than jungle people? Some scholar. I could prove your point in six sentences." Nor was there much enthusiasm for the subject when he proposed it at a staff meeting, although he did manage to get clearance for it. His technique so far has been to steep him-

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self in the images of the past, to turn himself, so far as is possible, into a citizen of the pre-urbmon society. He hopes that that will give him the essential parallax, the perspective on his own society, that he will need when he begins to write his study. He expects to start writing in two or three years.

He consults a memorandum, chooses a cube.

A kind of ecstasy comes over him as scenes out of the ancient world materialize. He leans close to his input speaker and begins to dictate. Frantically, frenziedly, Jason Quevedo sets down notes on the way it used to be.

II

HOUSES and streets. A horizontal world. Individual family shelter units: this is my house, this is my castle. Fantastic! Three people, taking up maybe a thousand square meters of surface. Roads. Concept of road hard for us to understand. Like a hallway going on and on. Private vehicles. Where are they all going? Why so fast? Why not stay home? Crash! Blood. Head goes through glass. Crash again! In the rear. Dark combustible fluid flows in street. Middle of day, springtime, major city. Street scene. Which city? Chicago, New York, Instanbul, Cairo. People walking about IN THE OPEN. Paved streets. This for walkers, this for drivers. Filth. Estimated grid reading: 10,000 pedestrians this sector alone, in strip 8 meters wide and 80 meters long. Is that figure right? Check it. Elbow to elbow. And they'd think our world was overcrowded? At least we don't impinge on each other like that. We know how to keep our distances within the overall structure of urbmon life. Vehicles move down middle of street. The good old chaos. Chief activity: the purchase of goods. Private consumption. Cube 11Ab8 shows interior vector of a shop. Exchanging of money for merchandise. Not much difference there except random nature of transaction. Do they need what they buy? Where do they PUT it all?

This cube holds nothing new for him. Jason has seen such city scenes many times before. Yet the fascination is ever fresh. He is tense, sweat flowing freely, as he strains to comprehend a world in which people may live where they please, where they move about on foot or in vehicles in the open, where there is no planning, no order, no restraint. He must perform a double act of imagination: it is necessary for him to see that vanished world from within, as though he lived in it and then he must try to see the urbmon society as it might seem to someone wafted forward from the twentieth century. The magnitude of the task dismays him. He knows roughly how an ancient would feel about Urbmon 116: it is a hellish place, the ancient would say, in which people live hideously cramped and brutal lives, in which every civilized philosophy is turned on its head, in which uncontrolled breeding is nightmarishly encouraged to serve

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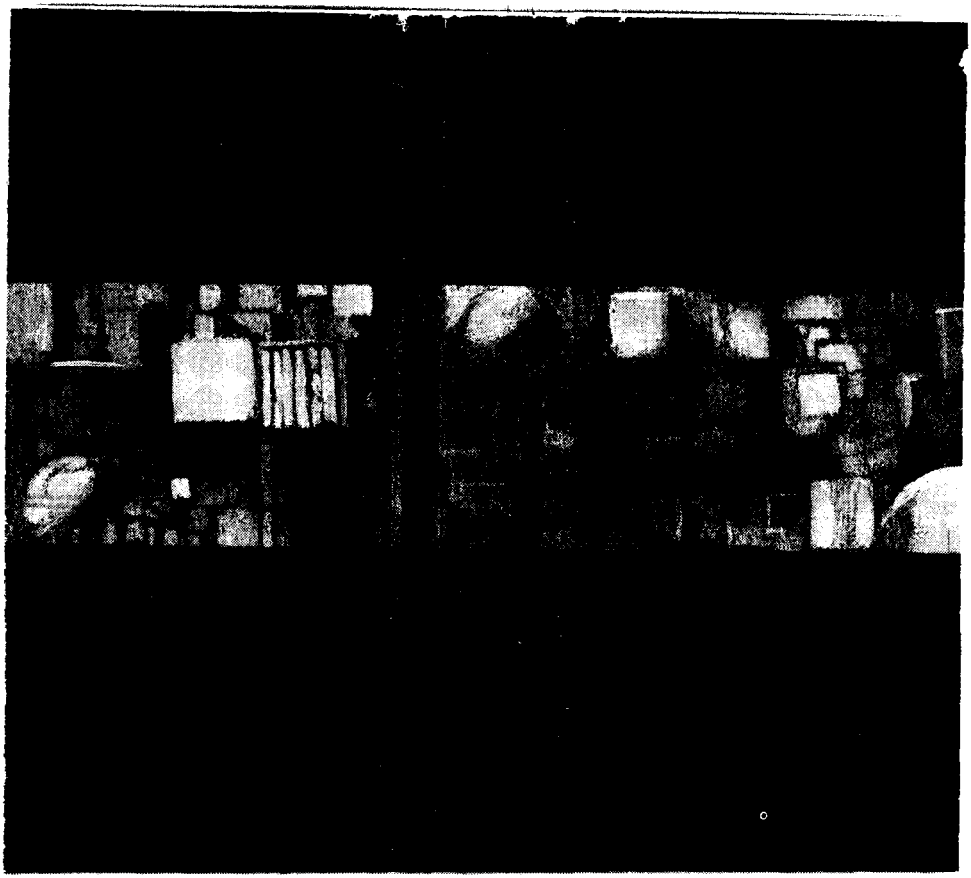

some incredible concept of a deity eternally demanding more worshipers, in which dissent is ruthlessly stifled and dissenters are peremptorily destroyed. Jason knows the right phrases, the sort of words an intelligent liberal American of, say, 1958 would use. But the inner spirit is missing. He tries to see his own world as a species of hell and fails. To him it is not hellish. He is a logical man; he knows why the vertical society had to evolve out of the old horizontal one and why it then became obligatory to eliminate—preferably before they were old enough to reproduce—all those who would not adapt or could not be adapted to the fabric of society. How could troublemakers be allowed to remain in the tight, intimate, carefully balanced structure of an urbmon? He knows that the probable result of tossing flippos down the chute has been, over a couple of centuries, the creation of a new style of human being through selective breeding. Is there now a *Homo urbmonensis*, placid, ad-

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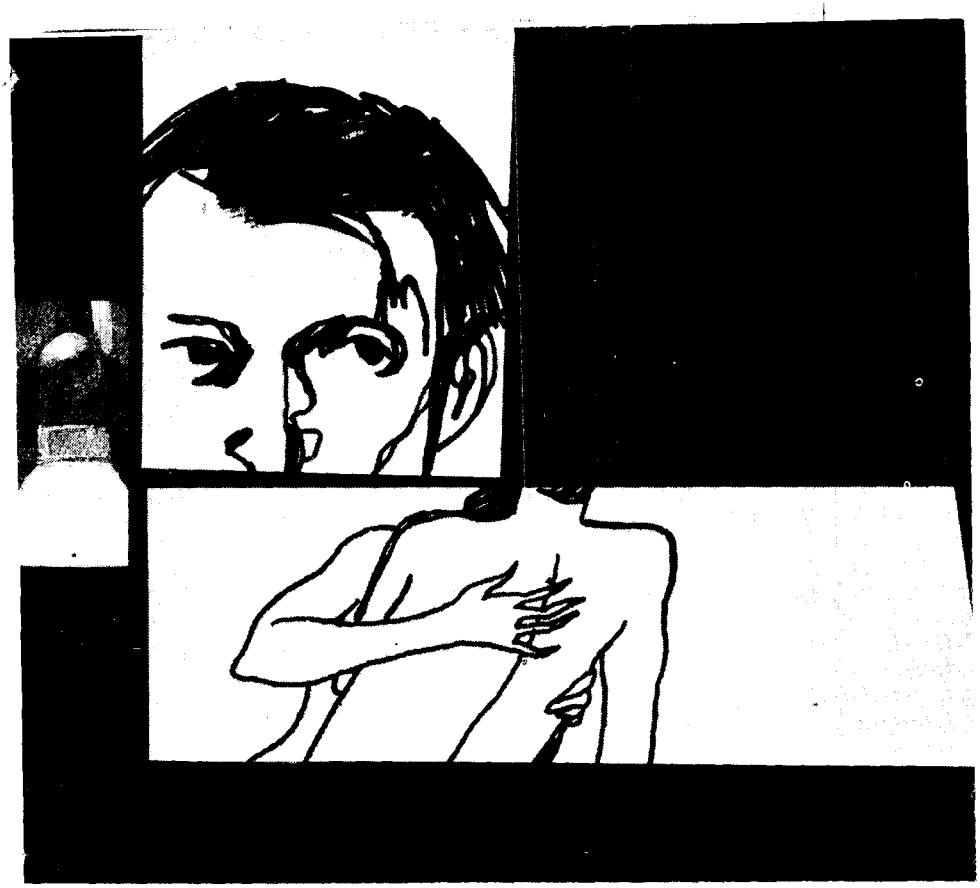

justed, fully content? These are topics he means to explore intensively when he writes his book. But it is so hard, so absurdly hard, to grasp them from the viewpoint of ancient man!

Jason struggles to understand the uproar over overpopulation in the ancient world. He has drawn from the archives scores of tracts directed against indiscriminate human spawning—angry polemics composed at a time when less than 4,000,000,000 people inhabited the world. He is aware, of course, that humans can choke a whole planet quickly when they live spread out horizontally the way they did; but why were they so worried about the future? Surely they could have foreseen the beauties of the vertical society!

No. No. That's just the point, he tells himself unhappily. They did *not* foresee any such thing. Instead they talked about limiting fertility, if necessary by imposing a governmental authority to hold population down. Jason shivers. *Don't you see,* he asks his cubes,

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that only a totalitarian regime could enforce such limits? You say that we're a repressive society. But what kind of society would you have built if the urbmons hadn't developed?

The voice of ancient man replies, *I'd rather take my chances on limiting births and allowing complete freedom otherwise. You've accepted the freedom to multiply but it's cost you all the other freedoms. Don't you see—*

You're the one who doesn't see, Jason blurts. *A society must sustain its momentum through the exploitation of god-given fertility. We've found a way to make room for everybody on Earth, to support a population ten or twenty times greater than what you imagined was the absolute maximum. You see it merely as suppression and authoritarianism. But what about the billions of lives that could never have come into being at all under your system? Isn't that the ultimate suppression: forbidding humans to exist in the first place?*

But what good is letting them exist if the best they can hope for is a box inside a box? What about the quality of life?

I see no defects in the quality of our life. We find fulfillment in the interplay of human relationships. Do I need to go to China or Africa for my pleasures when I can find them within a single building? Isn't it a sign of inner dislocation to feel compelled to roam all over the world? In your day everybody traveled, I know, and in mine no one does. Which is a more stable society? Which is the happier one?

Which is more human? Which exploits man's potential more fully? Isn't it our nature to seek, to strive, to reach out?

What about seeking within? Exploring the inner life?

But don't you see—

But don't you see—

If you only would listen—

If you only would listen—

Jason does not see. Ancient man's spokesman does not see. Neither will listen. There is no communication. Jason wastes another dismal day wrestling with his intractable material. Only as he is about to leave does he remember last night's memorandum. He will study ancient sexual mores in a new attempt to gain insight into that vanished society. He punches out his requisition. The cubes will be on his desk when he returns to his office tomorrow.

He goes home to Shanghai, home to Micaela.

THAT evening the Quevedos have dinner guests: Michael, Micaela's twin brother, and his wife Stacion. Michael is a computer-primer; he and Stacion live in Edinburgh, on the 704th floor. Jason finds his company challenging and rewarding, although the physical resemblance between his brother-in-law and his wife, which he once found amusing, now alarms and disturbs him. Michael affects shoulder-length hair, and is barely a centimeter taller than his tall, slender sister. They are, of course, only fraternal twins, yet their facial features are virtually

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identical. They have even settled into the same pattern of tense, querulous smirks and scowls. From the rear Jason has difficulties in telling them apart unless he sees them side by side; they stand the same way, arms akimbo, heads tilted backward. Since Micaela is small-breasted, the possibility of confusion exists also in profile and sometimes, looking at one of them in front view, Jason has momentarily wondered whether he beholds Michael or Micaela. If only Michael would grow a beard! But his cheeks are smooth.

Now and again Jason feels sexually drawn to his brother-in-law. It is a natural attraction, considering the physical pull Micaela has always exerted on him. Seeing her across the room, angled away from him, her smooth back bare, the little globe of one breast visible under her arm as she reaches toward the data terminal, he feels the urge to go to her and caress her. And if she were Michael? And if he slid his hand to her bosom and found it flat and hard? And if they tumbled down together in a passionate tangle? His hand going to Micaela's thighs and finding not the hot hidden slot but the dangling flesh of maleness? And turning her over. Him? Parting the pallid muscular buttocks. The sudden strange thrust. No. Jason flushes the fantasy from his mind. Once again. Not since the rough easy days of boyhood has he had any kind of sexual contact with his own sex. He will not permit it. There are no penalties for such things, naturally, in the society of the urbmon, where all adults are equally accessible. Many of them do it. For all he knows, Michael himself. If Jason wants Michael, he has only to ask. Refusal a sin. He does not ask. He fights the temptation. *It is not fair, a man who looks so much like my wife. The devil's snare. Why do I resist, though? If I want him, why not take? But no. I don't really want. It's just a sneaky urge, a sidewise way of desiring Micaela.* And yet the fantasy surges again. Himself and Michael, spoon-fashion, mouths gaping and stuffed. The image glows so brightly that Jason rises in a brusque tense motion, knocking over the flask of wine that Stacion has brought tonight and, as Stacion dives for and rescues it, he crosses the room, aghast at the erection prodding his taut gold-and-green shorts. He goes to Micaela and cups one of her breasts. The nipple is soft. He snuggles against her, nibbles the nape of her neck. She tolerates these attentions in a remote way, not interrupting the programing of dinner. But when, still distraught, he slips his left hand into the open side of her sarong and runs it across her belly to her loins, she wriggles her hips in displeasure and whispers harshly, "Stop it! Not with them sitting there!"

Wildly he finds the fumes and offers them around. Stacion refuses; she is pregnant. A plump, pleasant, red-haired girl, complacent, easy. Out of place in this congregation of the hyptertense. Jason sucks the smoke deep and

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feels the knots loosen slightly inside. Now he can look at Michael and not fall prey to unnatural urges. Yet he still speculates. Does Michael suspect? Would he laugh if I told him? Take offense? Angry at me for wanting to? Angry at me for not trying to? Suppose he asked *me* to, what would I do? Jason takes a second fume and the swarm of buzzing questions leaves his mind. "When is the little due?" he asks, in counterfeit geniality.

"God bless, fourteen weeks," Michael says. "Number five. A girl, this time."

"We'll name her Celeste," Stacion puts in, patting her middle. Her maternity costume is a short yellow bolero and a loose brown waist-sash. Leaving the bulging belly bare. The everted navel like the stem of the swollen fruit. Milky breasts swaying in and out of visibility under the open jacket. "We're talking about requesting twins for next year," she adds. "A boy and a girl. Michael's always telling me about the good times he and Micaela used to have together when they were young. Like a special world for twins."

Jason is caught unawares by the bringdown and is plunged abruptly into feverish fantasy once more. He sees Micaela's spread legs sticking out from under Michael's lean pumping body, sees her childish ecstatic face looking up over his busy shoulder. The good times they used to have. Michael the first one into her. At nine—ten, maybe? Even younger? Their awkward experiments. *Let me get on top of you this time, Michael. Oh, it's deeper this way. Do you think we're doing anything wrong? No, silly, didn't we sleep together for nine whole months? Put your hand here. And your mouth on me again. Yes. You're hurting my breasts, Michael. Oh, that's nice. But wait just another few seconds* . . . the good times they used to have. "Is something the matter, Jason?" Michael's voice. "You look so tight." Jason forces himself to pull out of it. Hands trembling. Another fume. He rarely takes three before dinner.

STACION has gone to help Micaela unload the food from the delivery slot. Michael says to Jason, "I hear you've started a new research project. What's the basic theme?"

Kind of him. Senses that I'm ill at ease. Draw me out of my morbid brooding. All these sick thoughts . . .

Jason replies, "I'm investigating the notion that urbmon life is breeding a new kind of human being. A type that adapts readily to relatively little living space and a low privacy quotient."

"You mean a genetic mutation?" Michael asks, frowning. "Literally an inherited social characteristic?"

"So I believe."

"Are such things possible, though? Can you call it a genetic trait, really, if people voluntarily decide to band together in a society like ours and—"

"Voluntarily?"

"Isn't it?"

Jason smiles. "I doubt that it

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ever was. In the beginning, you know, it was a matter of necessity. Because of the chaos in the world. Seal yourself up in your building or be exposed to the food bandits. I'm talking about the famine years, now. And since then, since everything stabilized, has it been so voluntary? Do we have any choice about where we live?"

"I suppose we could go outside if we really wanted to," Michael says, "and live in whatever they've got out there."

"But we don't. Because we recognize that that's a hopeless fantasy. We stay here, whether we like it or not. And those who don't like it, those who eventually can't take it—well, you know what happens to them."

"But—"

"Wait. Two centuries of selective breeding, Michael. Down the chute for the flippos. And no doubt some population loss through leaving the buildings, at least at the beginning. Those who remain adapt to circumstances. They like the urbmon way. It seems altogether natural to them."

"Is this really genetic, though? Couldn't you simply call it psychological conditioning? I mean, in the Asian countries, didn't people always live jammed together the way we do, only much worse, no sanitation, no regulation—and didn't they accept it as the natural order of things?"

"Of course," Jason says. "Because rebellion against the natural order of things had been bred out of them thousands of years ago. The ones who stayed, the ones who reproduced, were the ones who accepted things as they were. The same here."

Doubtfully Michael says, "How can you draw the line between psychological conditioning and long-term selective breeding? How do you know what to attribute to which?"

"I haven't faced that problem yet," Jason admits.

"Shouldn't you be working with a geneticist?"

"Perhaps later I will. After I've established my parameters of inquiry. You know, I'm not ready to defend this thesis, yet. I'm just collecting data to discover if it can be defended. The scientific method. We don't make *a priori* assumptions and look around for supporting evidence. We examine the evidence first and—"

"Yes, yes, I know. Just between us, though, you do think it's really happening, don't you? An urbmon species."

"I do. Yes. Two centuries of selective breeding, pretty ruthlessly enforced. And all of us so well adapted now to this kind of life."

"Ah. Yes. All of us so well adapted."

"With some exceptions," Jason says, retreating a bit. He and Michael exchange wary glances. Jason wonders what thoughts lie behind his brother-in-law's cool eyes. "General acceptance, though. Where has the old western expansionist philosophy gone? Bred out of the race, I say. The urge to power? The love of conquest? The hunger for land and property? Gone. Gone. Gone. I don't think

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that's just a conditioning process. I suspect it's a matter of stripping the race of certain genes that lead to—"

"Dinner, professor," Micaela calls.

A costly meal. Proteoid steaks, root salad, bubble pudding, relishes, fish soup. Nothing reconstituted and hardly anything synthetic. For the next two weeks he and Micaela will have to go on short rations until they've made up the deficit in their luxury allotment. He conceals his annoyance. Michael always eats lavishly when he comes here; Jason wonders why, since Micaela is not nearly so solicitous of her seven other brothers and sisters. Scarcely ever invites two or three of them. But Michael here at least five times a year, always getting a feast. Jason's suspicions reawaken. Something ugly going on between those two? The childhood passions still smouldering? Perhaps it is cute for twelve-year-old twins to couple but should they still be at it when twenty-three and married? Michael a nightwalker in my sleeping platform? Jason is annoyed at himself. Not bad enough that he has to fret over his idiotic homosexual fixation on Michael; now he has to torment himself with fears of an incestuous affair behind his back. Poisoning his hours of relaxation. *What if they are? Nothing socially objectionable in it. Seek pleasure where you will. In your sister's slot if you be so moved. Shall all the men of Urban Monad 116 have access to Micaela Quevedo, save only the unfortunate Michael? Must his status as her wombmate deny her to him? Be realistic,* Jason tells himself. *Incest taboos make sense only where breeding is involved. Anyway, they probably aren't doing it, probably never have . . .* He wonders why so much nastiness has sprouted in his soul lately. The frictions of living with Micaela, he decides. *Her coldness is driving me into all kinds of unblessworthy attitudes, the bitch. If she doesn't stop goading me I'll . . . I'll what? Seduce Michael away from her?*

He laughs at the intricacy of his own edifice of schemes.

"SOMETHING funny?" Micaela asks. "Share it with us, Jason."

He looks up, helpless. What shall he say? "A silly thought," he improvises. "About you and Michael, how much you look like each other. I was thinking—perhaps some night you and he could switch rooms and a nightwalker would come here looking for you. But when he actually got under the covers with you he'd discover that he was in bed with a man and—and—" Jason is smitten with the overwhelming fatuity of what he is saying and descends into a feeble silence.

"What a peculiar thing to imagine," Micaela says.

"Besides, so what?" Stacion asks. "The nightwalker might be a little surprised for a minute, maybe, but then he'd just go ahead and make it with Michael, wouldn't he? Rather than make a big scene or bother to go someplace else. So I don't see what's funny."

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"Forget it," Jason growls. "I told you it was silly. Micaela insisted on knowing what was crossing my mind and I told you. But I'm not responsible if it doesn't make any sense, am I? Am I?" He grabs the flask of wine and pours most of what remains into his cup. "This is good stuff," he mutters.

After dinner they share an expander, all but Stacion. They groove in silence for a couple of hours. Shortly before midnight Michael and Stacion leave. Jason does not watch as his wife and her brother make their farewell embraces. As soon as the guests are gone, Micaela strips away her sarong and gives him a bright, fierce stare, almost defying him to have her tonight. But though he knows it is unkind to ignore her wordless invitation, he is so depressed by his own inner performance this evening that he feels he must flee. "Sorry," he says. "I'm restless." Her expression changes; desire fades and is replaced by bewilderment, then by rage. He does not wait. Hastily he goes out, rushing to the dropshaft and plummeting to the 59th floor. Warsaw. He enters an apartment and finds a woman of about thirty, with fuzzy blonde hair and a soft fleshy body, asleep alone on an unkempt sleeping platform. At least eight littles stacked up on cots in the corners. He wakes her. "Jason Quevedo," he says. "I'm from Shanghai."

She blinks. Having trouble focusing her eyes. "Shanghai? But are you supposed to be here?"

"Who says I can't?"

She ponders that. "Nobody says. But Shanghai never comes here. Really, Shanghai? You?"

"Do I have to show you my identiplate?" he asks harshly.

His educated inflections destroy her resistance. She begins to primp, arranging her hair, reaching for some kind of cosmetic spray for her face, while he drops his clothing. He mounts the platform. She draws her knees up almost to her breasts, presenting herself. Crudely, impatiently, he takes her. *Michael*, he thinks. *Micaela. Michael. Micaela.* Grunting, he floods her.

III

IN THE morning, at his office, he begins his newest line of inquiry, summoning up data on the sexual mores of ancient times. As usual he concentrates on the twentieth century, which he regards as the climax of the ancient era and therefore most significant, revealing as it does the entire cluster of attitudes and responses that had accumulated in the pre-urbmon industrial era. The twenty-first century is less useful for his purposes, being, like all transitional periods, essentially chaotic and unschematic, and the twenty-second century brings him into modern times with the beginning of the urbmon age. So the twentieth is his favorite area of study. Seeds of the collapse, portents of doom running through it like bad-trip threads in a psychedelic tapestry.

Jason is careful not to fall victim to the historian's fallacy of diminished perspective. Though

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the twentieth century, seen from this distance, seems to be a single seamless entity, he knows that this is an error of evaluation caused by overfacile abstracting; there may be certain apparent patterns that ride one unbroken curve across the ten decades but he realizes that he must allow for certain qualitative changes in society that have created major historical discontinuities between decade and decade. The unleashing of atomic energy created one such discontinuity. The development of swift intercontinental transporation formed another. In the moral sphere, the availability of simple and reliable contraception caused a fundamental change in sexual attitudes, a revolution not to be ascribed to mere rebelliousness. The arrival of the psychedelic age, with its special problems and joys, marked one more great gulf, setting off part of the century from all that went before. So 1910 and 1930 and 1950 and 1970 and 1990 occupy individual summits in Jason's jagged image of the century, and in any sampling of its mentality that he takes, he draws evidence from each of its discrete subepochs.

Plenty of evidence is available to him. Despite the dislocations caused by the collapse an enormous weight of data on the eras of pre-urbmon time exists, stored in some subterranean vault, Jason knows not where. Certainly the central data bank (if there is indeed only one and not a redundant series of them scattered through the world) is not anywhere in Urbmon 116 and he doubts that it is even in the Chipitts constellation. It does not matter. He can draw from that vast deposit any information that he requires and it will come instantaneously. The trick lies in knowing what to ask for.

He is familiar enough with the sources to be able to make intelligent data requisitions. He thumbs the keys and the new cubes arrive. Novels. Films. Television programs. Leaflets. Handbills. He knows that for more than half the century popular attitudes toward sexual matters were recorded both in licit and illicit channels—the ordinary novels and motion pictures of the day and an underground stream of clandestine, "forbidden" erotic works. Jason draws from both groups. He must weigh the distortions of the erotica against the distortions of the legitimate material: only out of this Newtonian interplay of forces can the objective truth be mined. Then, too, he surveys the legal codes, making the appropriate allowances for laws observed only in the breach. What is this in the laws of New York: "A person who wilfully and lewdly exposes his person or the private parts thereof, in any public place, or in any place where others are present, or procures another to so expose himself shall be guilty of..." Guilty of what? In the state of Georgia, he reads, any sleeping car passenger who remains in a compartment other than the one to which he is assigned is guilty of a misdemeanor and is subject to a maximum fine of $1000 or twelve months' imprisonment. The laws of the state of

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Michigan tell him, "Any person who shall undertake to medically treat any female person, and while so treating her shall represent to such female that it is, or will be necessary or beneficial to her health that she shall have sexual intercourse with a man, and any man, not being the husband of such female, who shall have sexual intercourse with her by reason of such representation, shall be guilty of a felony, and be punished by a maximum term of 10 years." Strange. Stranger still: "Every person who shall carnally know, or shall have sexual intercourse in any manner with any animal or bird, is guilty of sodomy. . ." No wonder everything's extinct! And this? "Whoever shall carnally know any male or female by the anus (rectum) or with the mouth or tongue, or who shall attempt intercourse with a dead body. . . $2000 and/or five years' imprisonment. . ." Most chilling of all: in Connecticut the use of contraceptive articles is forbidden, under penalty of a minimum fine of fifty dollars or sixty days to one year in prison—and in Massachusetts "whoever sells, lends, gives, exhibits (or offers to) any instrument or drug, or medicine, or any article whatever for the prevention of conception, shall be subject to a maximum term of five years in prison or a maximum fine of $1000." What? What? Send a man to prison for decades for cunnilingualizing his wife and impose so trifling a sentence on the spreaders of contraception? Where was Connecticut, anyway? Where was Massachusetts? Historian that he is, he is not sure. God bless, he thinks, but the doom that came upon them was well merited. A bizarre folk to deal so lightly with those who would limit births!

HE SKIMS a few novels and dips into several films. Even though it is only the first day of his research, he perceives patterns, a fitful loosening of taboos throughout the century, accelerating greatly between 1920 and 1930 and again after 1960. Timid experiments in revealing the ankle lead, shortly, to bared breasts. The curious custom of prostitution erodes as liberties become more commonly obtained. The disappearance of taboos on the popular sexual vocabulary. He can barely believe some of what he learns. So compressed were their souls! So thwarted were their urges! And why? And why? Of course, they did grow looser. Yet terrible restraints prevail throughout that dark century, except toward the end, when the collapse was their liberation. He sees a forced, self-conscious mode of amorality coming into being. The shy nudists. The guilt-wracked orgiasts. The apologetic adulterers. Strange, strange, strange. He is endlessly fascinated by the twentieth century's sexual concepts. The wife as husband's property. The premium on virginity: well, they seemed to get rid of *that*! Attempts by the state to dictate positions of sexual intercourse and to forbid certain supplementary acts. The restrictions even on words! A

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phrase leaps out of a supposedly serious twentieth-century work of social criticism: "Among the most significant developments of the decade was the attainment of the freedom, at last, for the responsible writer to use such words as *fuck* and *cunt* where necessary in his work." Can that have been so? Such importance placed on mere words? Jason pronounces the odd monosyllables aloud in his research cubicle. "Fuck. Cunt. Fuck. Cunt. Fuck." They sound merely antiquated. Harmless, certainly. He tries the modern equivalents. "Top. Slot. Top. Slot. Top." No impact. How can words ever have held such inflammatory content that an apparently penetrating scholar would feel it worthwhile to celebrate their free public use? Jason is aware of his limitations as a historian when he runs into such things. He simply cannot comprehend the twentieth-century's obsession with words. To insist on giving God a capital letter, as though He might be displeased to be called god! To suppress books for printing words like c--t and f--k and s--t!

By the close of his day's work he is more convinced than ever of the validity of his thesis. There has been a monumental change in sexual morality in the past three hundred years and it cannot be explained only on cultural grounds. *We are different*, he tells himself. *We have changed and it is a cellular change, a transformation of the body as well as the soul. They could not have permitted, let alone encouraged, our total-accessibility society. Our nightwalking, our nudity, our freedom from taboos, our lack of irrational jealousies, all of this would have been wholly alien to them, distasteful, abominable. Even those who lived in a way approaching ours—and there were a few—did so for the wrong reasons. They were responding not to a positive societal need but to an existing system of repression. We are different. We are fundamentally different.*

Weary, satisfied with what he has found, he leaves his office an hour ahead of time. When he returns to his apartment, Micaela is not there.

THIS puzzles him. Always here at this hour. The littles left alone, playing with their toys. Of course it is a bit early, not much. Just stepped out for a chat? I don't understand. She hasn't left a message. He says to his eldest son, "Where's Mommo?"

"Went out."

"Where?"

A shrug. "Visiting."

"How long ago?"

"An hour. Maybe two."

Some help. Fidgety, perturbed, Jason calls a couple of women on the floor, Micaela's friends. They haven't seen her. The boy looks up and says brightly, "She was going to visit a man." Jason stares sharply at him. "A man? Is that what she said? What man?" But the boy has exhausted his information. Fearful that she has gone off for a rendezvous with Michael, he debates phoning Edinburgh. Just to see if she's there. A lengthy

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inner debate. Furious images racing in his skull. Micaela and Michael entangled, indistinguishable, united, inflamed. Locked together in incestuous passion. As perhaps every afternoon. How long has this been going on? And she comes to me at dinnertime every evening hot and wet from him. He calls Edinburgh and gets Stacion on the screen. Calm, bulgy. "Micaela? No, of course she isn't here. Is she supposed to be?"

"I thought maybe—dropping in—"

"I haven't heard from her since we were at your place."

He hesitates. Just as she moves to break the connection he blurts, "Do you happen to know where Michael is right now?"

"Michael? He's at work. Interface Crew Nine."

"Are you sure?"

Stacion looks at him in obvious surprise. "Of course I'm sure. Where else would he be? His crew doesn't break till seventeen-thirty." Laughs. "You aren't suggesting that Michael—that Michela—"

"Of course not. What kind of fool do you think I am? I just wondered—that perhaps—if—" He is adrift. "Forget it, Stacion. Give him my love when he comes home." Jason cuts the contact. Head bowed, eyes full of unwanted visions. Michael's long fingers encircling his sister's breasts. Rosy nipples poking through. Mirror-image faces nose to nose. Tonguetips touching. No. Where is she, then? He is tempted to try to reach him in Interface Crew Nine. Find out if Michael really is on duty. Or maybe off in some dark cubbyhole topping his sister. Jason throws himself face down on the sleeping platform to consider his position. He tells himself that it is not important that Micaela is letting her brother top her. Not at all. He will not let himself be trapped into primeval twentieth-century attitudes of morality. On the other hand, it is a considerable violation of custom for Micaela to go off in mid-afternoon to be topped. *If she wants Michael*, Jason thinks, *let him come here decently after midnight, as a nightwalker. Instead of this skulking and sneaking. Does she think I'd be shocked to know who her lover is? Does she have to hide it from me this way? It's a hundred times as bad to steal away like this. It introduces a note of deceit. Old-fashioned adultery; the secret rendezvous. How ugly! I'd like to tell her. . .*

The door opens and Micaela comes in. She is naked under a translucent flutter-robe and has a flushed, rumpled look. She smirks at Jason. He perceives the loathing behind the smirk.

"Well?" he says.

"Well?"

"I was surprised not to find you here when I got home."

Coolly Micaela disrobes. She gets under the cleanser. From the way she scrubs herself there can be no doubt that she has just been topped. After a moment she says, "I got back a little late, didn't I? Sorry."

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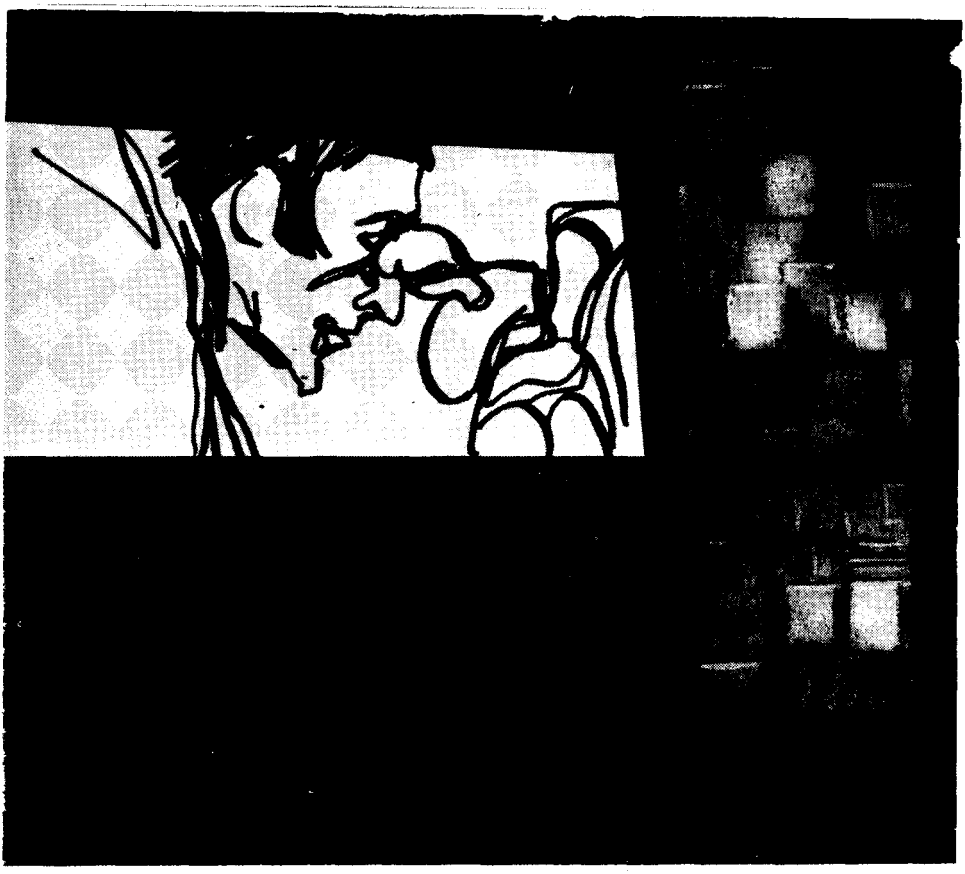

"Got back from where?"

"Siegmund Kluver's."

He is astounded and relieved all at once. What is this? Daywalking? And a woman taking the sexual initiative? But at least it wasn't Michael. If he can believe her. "Siegmund?" he says. "What do you mean, Siegmund?"

"I visited him. Didn't the littles tell you? He had some free time today and I went up to his place. Quite blessworthy, I must say. An expert slotman. Not my first time with him but by far the best."

She steps out from the cleanser, seizes two of the littles, strips them, thrusts them under for their afternoon bath. Paying almost no attention to Jason. He contemplates her lithe bare body in dismay. A lecture on urbmon sexual ethics almost spills from him but he dams his lips, baffled and agog. Having laboriously adjusted himself to accept the unacceptable notion of her incestuous love, he cannot easily come to terms with this other business of Siegmund. Chasing after him? Daywalking.

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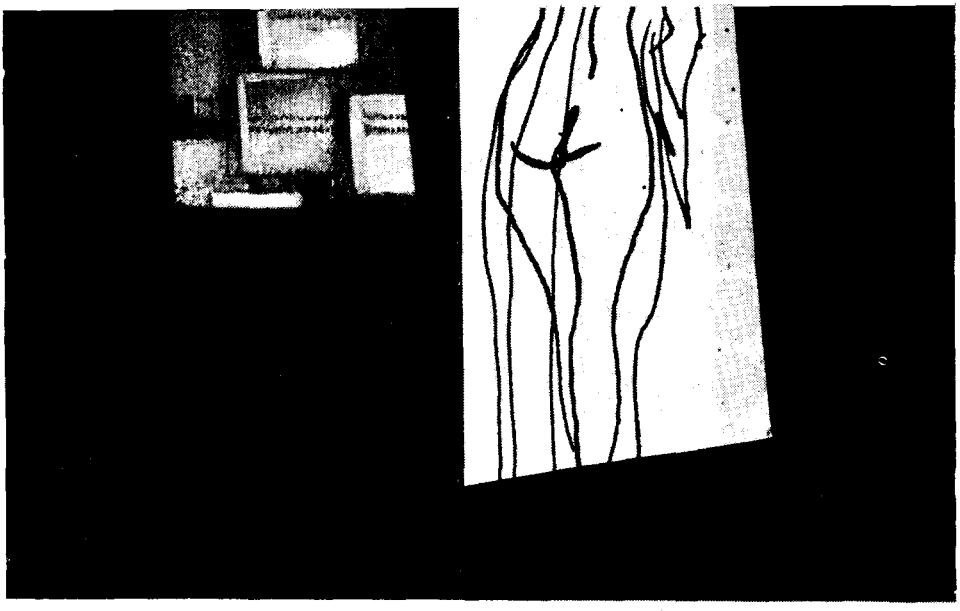

Daywalking? Has she no shame? Why has she done this? *Purely for spite*, he tells himself. *To mock me. To anger me. To show me how little she cares for me. Using sex as a weapon against me. . .*

Flaunting her illicit hour with Siegmund. But Siegmund should have had more sense. A man with his ambitions, violating custom? Perhaps Micaela overwhelmed him. She can do that. Even to Siegmund. The bitch! The bitch! He sees her looking at him now, eyes sparkling, mouth quirked in a hostile smile. Daring him to start a fight. Begging him to try to make trouble.

No, Micaela, I won't play your game. . .

As she bathes the littles he says quite serenely, "What are you programing for dinner tonight?"

IV

AT WORK the next day he decubes a motion picture of 1969 —ostensibly a comedy, he imagines, about two California couples

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who decide to exchange mates for a night, then find themselves without the courage to go through with it. Jason is wholly drawn into the film, enthralled not only by the scenes of private houses and open countryside but by the sheer alienness of the characters' psychology —their transparent bravado, their intense anguish over a matter as trivial as who will poke what into whom, their ultimate cowardice. It is easier for him to understand the nervous hilarity with which they experiment with what he takes to be cannabis, since the film, after all, dates from the dawn of the psychedelic era. But their sexual attitudes are wondrously grotesque. He watches the film twice, taking copious notes. Why are these people so timid? Do they fear an unwanted pregnancy? A social disease? No, the time of the film is after the venereal era, he believes. Is it pleasure itself that they fear? Tribal punishment for violation of the monopolistic concept of twentieth-century marriage? Even if the violation is conducted with absolute secrecy? That must be it, Jason concludes. They dread the laws against extramarital intercourse. The rack and the thumbscrew, the stocks and the ducking-stool, so to speak. Hidden eyes watching. The shameful truth destined to out. So they draw back; so they remain locked in the cells of their individual marriages.

Watching their antics he suddenly sees Micaela in the context of twentieth-century bourgeois morality. Not a timid fool like the four people in the film, of course. Brazen, defiant—bragging about her visit to Siegmund, using sex as a way of diminishing her husband. A very twentieth-century attitude, far removed from the easy acceptance characteristic of the urbmon world. Only someone whose view of sex is tied to its nature as a commodity could have done what Micaela has done. She has reinvented adultery in a society where the concept has no meaning! His anger rises. Out of 800,000 people in Urban Monad 116, why must he be married to the one sick one?

Flirting with her brother because she knows it annoys me, not because she's really interested in him. Going to Siegmund instead of waiting for Siegmund to come to her. The slotty barbarian! I'll show her, though. I know how to play her silly sadistic game!

At midday he leaves his cubicle, having done less than five hours' work. The liftshaft takes him to the 787th floor. Outside the apartment of Siegmund and Mamelon Kluver he succumbs to sudden terrible vertigo and nearly falls. He recovers his balance—but fear is still great and he is tempted to leave. He argues with himself, trying to purge his timidity. Thinking of the people in the motion picture. Why is he afraid? Mamelon's just another slot. He's had a hundred as attractive as she. But she's clever.

Might cut me down with a couple of quick quips. Still, I want her. Denied myself all these years. While Micaela blithely marches off to Siegmund in the afternoon.

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The bitch. The bitch. Why should I suffer? We aren't supposed to have to feel frustration in the urbmon environment. I want Mamelon, therefore.

He pushes open the door.

The Kluver apartment is empty. A baby in the maintenance slot, no other sign of life.

"Mamelon?" he asks. Voice almost cracking.

The screen glows and Mamelon's pre-programed image appears. How beautiful, he thinks. How radiant she is. Smiling. She says, "Hello. I have gone to my afternoon polyrhythm class and will be home at 1500 hours. Urgent messages may be relayed to me in Shanghai Somatic Fulfillment Hall or to my husband Siegmund at Louisville Access Nexus. Thank you." The image fades.

1500 hours. Nearly a two-hour wait. Shall he go?

He craves another glimpse of her loveliness. "Mamelon?" he says.

She reappears on screen. He studies her. The aristocratic features, the dark mysterious eyes. A self-contained woman, undriven by demons. A personality in her own right, not, like Micaela, a frayed neurotic whipped by the psychic winds. "Hello. I have gone to my afternoon polyrhythm class and will be home at 1500 hours. Urgent messages may be relayed—"

He waits.

The apartment, which he has seen before, impresses him anew with its elegance. Rich textures of hangings and draperies, sleek objects of art. Marks of status. Soon Siegmund will move up to Louisville, no doubt and these private possessions are harbingers of his coming elevation to the ruling caste. To ease his impatience Jason toys with the wall-panels, inspects the furniture, programs all the scent-apertures. He peers at the baby cooing in its maintenance slot. He paces. The other Kluver child must be two years old by now. Will it come home from the creche soon? He is not eager to entertain a little all afternoon while waiting tautly for Mamelon.

HE TUNES the screen and watches one of the afternoon abstractions. The flow of forms and colors carries him through another impatient hour. Mamelon will be here soon.

1450. She comes in, holding her little's hand. Jason rises, athrob, dry-throated. She is dressed simply and unglamorously in a cascading blue tunic, knee-length, and gives an unusually disheveled impression. Why not? She has spent the afternoon in physical exercise; he cannot expect her to be the impeccable, glistening Mamelon of the evenings.

"Jason? Is something wrong? Why—"

"Just a visit," he says, barely able to recognize his own voice.

"You look half flippo, Jason! Are you ill? Can I get you anything?" She discards her tunic and tosses it, crumpled, under the cleanser. Under it she wears only

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a filmy wrap; he averts his eyes from her blazing nudity. And stares out of the corners as she drops the wrap also, washes and dons a light housecoat. Turning to him again, she says, "You're acting very strangely."

Out with it in a rush.

"Let me top you, Mamelon!"

A surprised laugh from her. "Now? Middle of the afternoon?"

"Is that so wicked?"

"It's unusual," she says. "Especially coming from a man who hasn't ever been to me as a nightwalker. But I suppose there's no harm in it. All right—come on."

As simple as that. She takes off the housecoat and inflates the sleeping platform. Of course—she will not frustrate him, for that would be unblessworthy. The hour is strange but Mamelon understands the code by which they live and does not hold him strictly to the rules. She is his. The white skin, the high full breasts. Deepset navel. Black matted thatch curling lavishly onto her thighs. She beckons to him from the platform, smiles, rubs her knees together to ready herself. He removes his clothing, carefully folding everything. He lies down beside her, takes one of her breasts nervously in his hand, lightly nips her earlobe. He wants desperately to tell her that he loves her. But that would be a breach of custom far more serious than any he has committed thus far. In a sense—not the twentieth-century sense—she belongs to Siegmund and he has no right to intrude his emotions between them. With a quick tense leap he climbs her. As usual, panic makes him hurry.

He gains control of himself and slows it down. He dares to open his eyes and is gratified to find that hers are closed. The nostrils flared, the lips drawn back. Such perfect white teeth. She seems to be purring. He moves a little faster. Clasping her in his arms; the mounds of her breasts flattening against him. Abruptly, amazingly, something extraordinary is kindled within her. She shrieks and makes hoarse animal noises as she claws at him. He is so astonished by the fury of her coming that he forgets to notice his own. So it ends. Exhausted, he clings to her a little while after and she strokes his sweaty shoulders. Analyzing it in the afterward coolness, he realizes that it was not so very different from what he has experienced elsewhere. One wilder-than-usual moment, perhaps. But otherwise only the familiar process. Even with Mamelon Kluver, the object of his incandescent imaginings for three years, it was only the old two-backed beast. So much for romanticism. In the dark all cats are gray: old twentieth-century proverb.

So now I've topped her.

He withdraws and they go to the cleanser together.

She says, "Better now?"

"I think so."

"You were terribly tight when I came in."

"I'm sorry," he says.

"Can I get you anything?"

"No."

"Would you like to talk?"

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"No. No." He is averting his eyes from her body again. He searches for his clothing. She does not bother to dress. "I guess I'll go," he says.

"Come back some time. Perhaps during regular nightwalking hours. I don't mean that I really mind you coming in the afternoon, Jason, but it might be more relaxed at night. Do you follow what I'm saying?"

She is frighteningly casual. Does she realize that this is the first time he has topped a woman of his own city? What if he told her that all his other adventures had been in Warsaw and Reykjavik and Prague and the other grubbo levels? He wonders now what he had feared. He will come back to her, he is sure. He makes his exit amid a flurry of grins, nods, half-winks and furtive direct glances. Mamelon blows him a kiss.

IN THE corridor. Still early afternoon. The whole point of this excursion will be lost if he comes home on time. He takes the dropshaft to his office and consumes two futile hours there. Even so, too early. Returning to Shanghai a little past 1800, he enters the somatic fulfillment hall and dumps himself into an image-bath. The warm undulating currents are soothing but he responds badly to the psychedelic vibrations from below and his mind fills with visions of shattered, blackened urbmons, all girders and skewed concrete. When he comes up it is 1920 and the screen in the dressing room, picking up his emanations, says, "Jason Quevedo, your wife is trying to trace you." Fine. Late for dinner. Let her squirm. He nods to the screen and goes out. After walking the halls for close to an hour, beginning at the 770th floor and snaking his way up to 792, he drops to his own level and heads for home.

A screen in the hall outside the shaft tells him again that tracers are out for him.

"I'm coming, I'm coming," he mutters, irritated.

Micaela looks rewardingly worried. "Where have you been?" she asks, the instant he appears.

"Oh, around. Around."

"You weren't working late. I called you there. I had tracers on you."

"As if I were a lost boy."

"It wasn't like you. You don't just disappear in the middle of the afternoon."

"Have you had dinner yet?"

"I've been waiting," she says sourly.

"Let's eat, then. I'm starved."

"You won't explain?"

"Later." Working hard at an air of mystery.

He scarcely notices his food. Afterward he spends the usual time with the littles. They go off to sleep. He rehearses what he will say to Micaela, arranging the words in various patterns. He tries inwardly to practice a self-satisfied smirk. For once he will be the aggressor. For once he will hurt *her*.

She has become absorbed in the screen transmission. Her earlier

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anxiety about his disappearance seems to have vanished. Finally he is forced to say, "Do you want to discuss what I did today?"

She looks up. "What you did? Oh, you mean this afternoon?" She no longer cares, it appears. "Well?"

"I went to Mamelon Kluver."

"Daywalking? You?"

"Me."

"Was she good?"

"She was superb," he says, puzzled by Micaela's air of unconcern. "She was everything I imagined she'd be."

Micaela laughs.

"Is it funny?" he asks.

"It isn't. You are."

"Tell me what you mean by that."

"All these years you deny yourself nightwalking in Shanghai and go off to the grubbos. Now, for the stupidest possible reason, you finally allow yourself Mamelon—"

"You knew I never nightwalked here?"

"Of course I knew," she says. "Women talk. I ask my friends. You never topped any of them. So I started to wonder. I had some checking done on you. Warsaw. Prague. Why did you have to go down there Jason?"

"That doesn't matter now."

"What does?"

"That I spent the afternoon on Mamelon's sleeping platform."

Silence.

"You idiot."

"Bitch."

"Failure."

"Sterilizer!"

"Grubbo!"

"Wait," he says. "Wait. Why did you go to Siegmund?"

"To annoy you," she admits. "Because he's a rung-grabber and you aren't. I wanted to get you excited. To make you move."

"So you violated all custom and aggressively daywalked with the man of your choice. Not pretty, Micaela. Not at all feminine, I might add."

"That keeps things even, then. A female husband and a mannish wife."

"You're quick with the insults, aren't you?"

"Why did you go to Mamelon?"

"To get you angry. To pay you back for Siegmund. Not that I give a damn about your letting him top you. We can take that stuff for granted, I think. But your motives. Using sex as a weapon. Deliberately playing the wrong role. Trying to stir me up. It was ugly, Micaela."

"And your motives? Sex as revenge? Nightwalking is supposed to reduce tensions, not to create them. Regardless of the time of day you do it. You want Mamelon, fine—she's a lovely girl. But to come here and brag about it, as if you think I care whose—"

"Don't be a filther, Micaela."

"Listen to him! Listen to him! Puritan! Moralist!"

They shout.

The littles begin to cry. They have never heard shouting before. Micaela makes a hushing gesture at them behind her back.

"At least I have morals," he

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says. "What about you and your brother Michael?"

"What about us?"

"Do you deny you've let him top you?"

"When we were kids, yes, a couple of times," she says, flushing. "So? You never touched your sisters, I suppose."

"Not only when you were kids. You're still making it with him."

"I think you're insane, Jason."

"You deny it?"

"Michael hasn't touched me in ten years. Not that I see anything wrong with his doing it, except that it hasn't happened. Oh, Jason, Jason, Jason! You've spent so much time mucking around in your archives that you've turned yourself into a twentieth-century man. You're jealous, Jason. Worried about incest, no less. And whether I obey the rules about female initiative. What about you and your Warsaw nightwalking? Don't we have a propinquity custom? Are you imposing a double standard, Jason? You do what you like and I observe custom? And upset about Siegmund. Michael. You're jealous, Jason. Jealous. We abolished jealousy a hundred and fifty years ago!"

"And you're a social climber. A would-be slicko. You aren't satisfied with Shanghai, you want Louisville. Well, ambition is obsolete, too, Micaela. Besides, you were the one who started this whole business of using sex to score debating points. By going to Siegmund and making sure I knew it. You think I'm a puritan? You're a throwback, Micaela. You're full of pre-urbmon morality."

"If I am, I got that way from you," she cries.

"No. I got that way from you. You carry the poison around in you. When you—"

The door opens. A man looks in. Charles Mattern, from 799. The sleek, fast-talking sociocomputator; Jason has worked with him on several research projects. Evidently he has overheard the unblessworthy furor going on in here, for he is frowning in embarrassment. "God bless," he says softly, "I'm just out nightwalking and I thought I'd—"

"No," Micaela screams. "Not now! Go away!"

Mattern shows his shock. He starts to say something, then shakes his head and ducks out of the room, muttering an apology for his intrusion.

Jason is appalled. To turn away a legitimate nightwalker? To order him out of the room?

"Savage!" he cries, and slaps her across the face. "How could you have done that?"

She recoils, rubbing her cheek. "Savage? Me? And you hitting? I could have you thrown down the chute for—"

"I could have you thrown down the chute for—"

He stops. They both are silent.

"YOU shouldn't have sent Mattern away," he says quietly, a little later.

"You shouldn't have hit me."

"I was worked up. Some rules

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just musn't be broken. If he reports you—"

"He won't. He could see we were having an argument. That I wasn't exactly available to him right then."

"Even having an argument," he says. "Screaming like that. Both of us. At the very least it could get us sent to the moral engineers."

"I'll fix things with Mattern, Jason. Leave it to me. I'll get him back here and explain and I'll give him the topping of his life." She laughs gently. "You dumb flippo." There is affection in her voice. "We probably sterilized half the floor with our screeching. What was the sense, Jason?"

"I was trying to make you understand something about yourself. Your essentially archaic psychological makeup, Micaela. If you could only see yourself objectively, the pettiness of a lot of your motivations lately—I don't want to start another fight, I'm just trying to explain things now—"

"And your motivations, Jason? You're just as archaic as I am. We're both throwbacks. Our heads are both full of primitive moralistic reflexes. Isn't that so? Can't you see it?"

Of course.

He walks away from her. Standing with his back to her, he fingers the rubbing-node set into the wall near the cleanser and lets some of the tensions flow from him into it. "Yes," he says after a long while. "Yes, I see it. We have a veneer of urbmonism. But underneath—jealousy, envy, possessiveness—"

"Yes. Yes."

"And you see what this does to my work, of course?" He manages a chuckle. "My thesis that selective breeding has produced a new species of human in the urbmons? Maybe so, but I don't belong to the species. You don't belong. Maybe they do, some of them. But how many? How many, really?"

His mind continues to echo the question.

She comes up behind him and leans close. He feels her nipples against his back. Hard, tickling him. "Most of them, perhaps," she says. "Your thesis may still be right. But we're wrong. We're out of place."

"Yes."

"Throwbacks to an uglier age."

"Yes."

"So we've got to stop torturing each other, Jason. We have to wear better camouflage. Do you see?"

"Yes. Otherwise we'll end up going down the chute. We're unblessworthy, Micaela."

"Both of us."

"Both of us."

He turns. His arms surround her. He winks. She winks.

"Vengeful barbarian," she says tenderly.

"Spiteful savage," he whispers, kissing her earlobe.

They slip together onto the sleeping platform. The nightwalkers will simply have to wait.

He has never loved her as much as he does this minute. ★

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containers for the condition of man

FACT FEATURE by LAURI VIRTA

(Photos by Leroy Woodson—Corcoran Gallery of Art)

"The most practical man on Earth and the wealthiest on top of that finds himself in the most extravagant and irrational position. The American metropolitan man is just plain silly and he's becoming aware of it . . ."

The Architectural Vision of Paolo Saleri—Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

THE condition of Man these days is often described as barely so-so. God is dead and the cities are sagging. There are too many of thee and scarcely enough of me and too often thee won't listen. Air, water and Earth are polluted and few of us, from top to bottom, show any great inclination to stop chewing each other's jugulars for reasons ranging from pot to patriotism. Few things work and people don't want to. It was about time for something to happen in New Jersey.

Man's current condition is probably as well exemplified in New Jersey as anywhere. The state is the most densely populated in the Union and economically among the most urbanized. Agriculture accounts for less than one per cent of its work force distribution; manufacture, trade, services and government—in that order—use up 84.2% of the remaining payroll. Spread out evenly over its land area nearly a thousand New Jerseyites might homestead each square mile of the state—delete lakes and waterways, roads and other transportation facilities, manufacturing and business sites, waste depots and other unusable areas and conditions for life become much more crowded.

Then try to shoehorn a badly needed modern jet airport right into where all the action is—that's where jetports are needed—and you have a problem. Perhaps even

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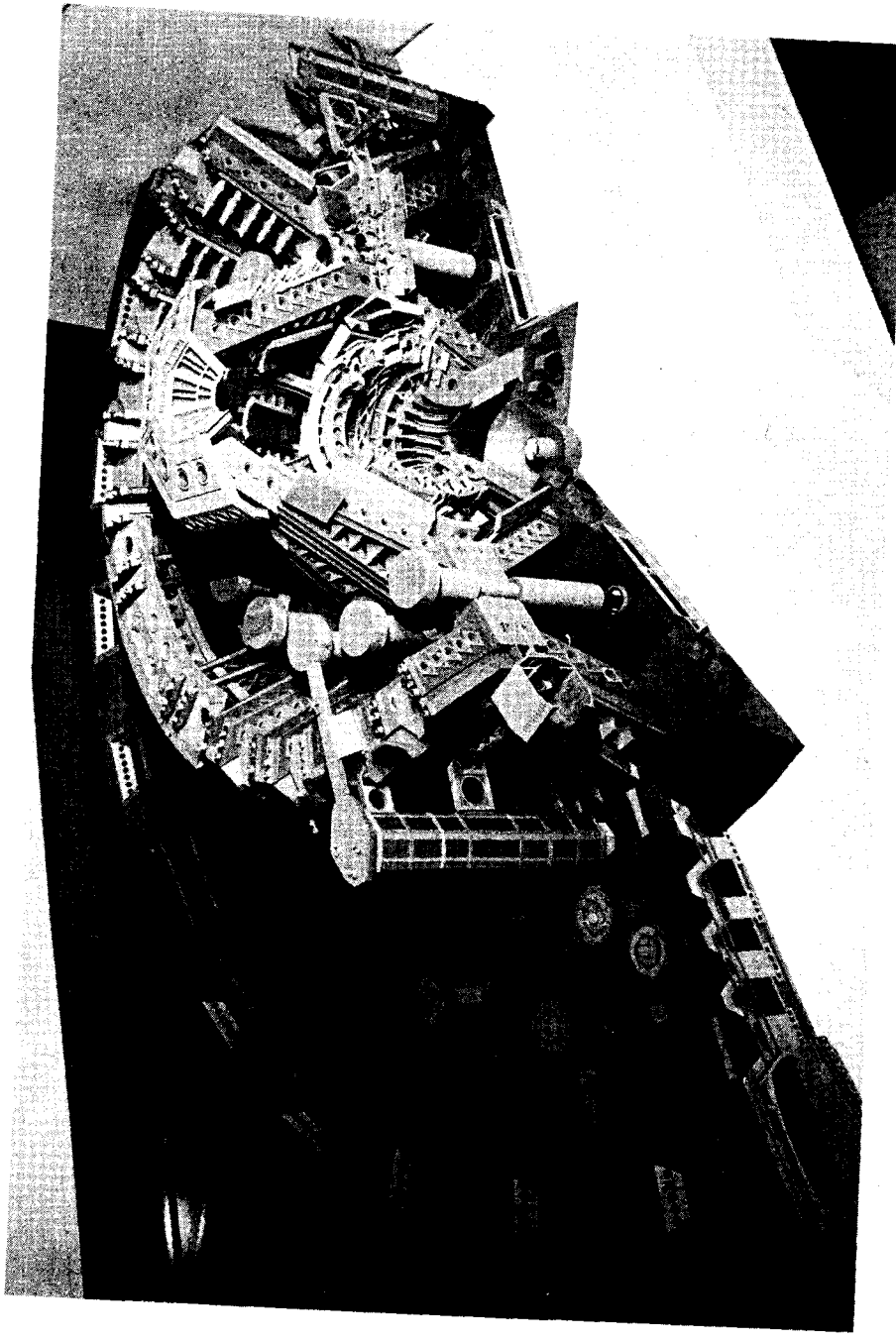

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a sudden life-and-death problem.

The photographs on the following pages treat it as such. The designer of the scale-model structures depicted, Arizona-based Architect Paolo Soleri, calls them arcologies, a name derived from combining architecture and ecology.

"When we cry for the raped Earth," says Soleri, "we cry for the narrowing lead we have on death."

Soleri's view of the future, however, is audacious rather than tearful. Man must be contained—but not imprisoned. His conditions of survival have grown increasingly complex—until their byproducts threaten that very survival. Soleri's arcologies are also defined as "containers for the *condition* of man—" italics ours—and include all of modern man's life-support artifacts and, hopefully, their evolutionary potential.

The first two photos show a three-dimensional model "container" titled 3-D Jersey, recently exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., under the joint sponsorship of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Prudential Insurance Company. It is a single-structure city, an integrated urban complex more than a mile in diameter and a half-mile high—twice-plus the height of the Empire State Building—designed to house, employ and completely service the economic, health, educational, cultural, physical and domestic needs of a million or more residents. With fresh air, sunlight and recreational facilities thrown in.

The concept grew out of New Jersey's need for a new, major airport and is the result of a study in depth which originally involved the State Planning Commission as overall coordinator of state planning, the Ford Motor Company as transportation consultant, Rutgers University as supplier of sociological input—and Paolo Soleri as designer.

The bionomic function of 3-D Jersey is that of a massive transportation center—air traffic is its supporting industry. In the design shown (photo, p. 56) the airfield—hinted at only fractionally at upper left and top—completely surrounds the city. Traffic from all points of the compass would reach the city without noisy and polluting overflights. Aircraft would touch down two to two and a half miles from the center of the city, taxi underground into the huge, encircling outer ring (shown partially at left and across the top of the photo). The ring houses terminals, freight and passenger areas, hangars and repair shops.

Traffic departures reverse the process. Takeoffs or liftoffs would again take place well away from the heart of the city. A small heliport—usable also by vertical-takeoff craft—perches atop an elevator

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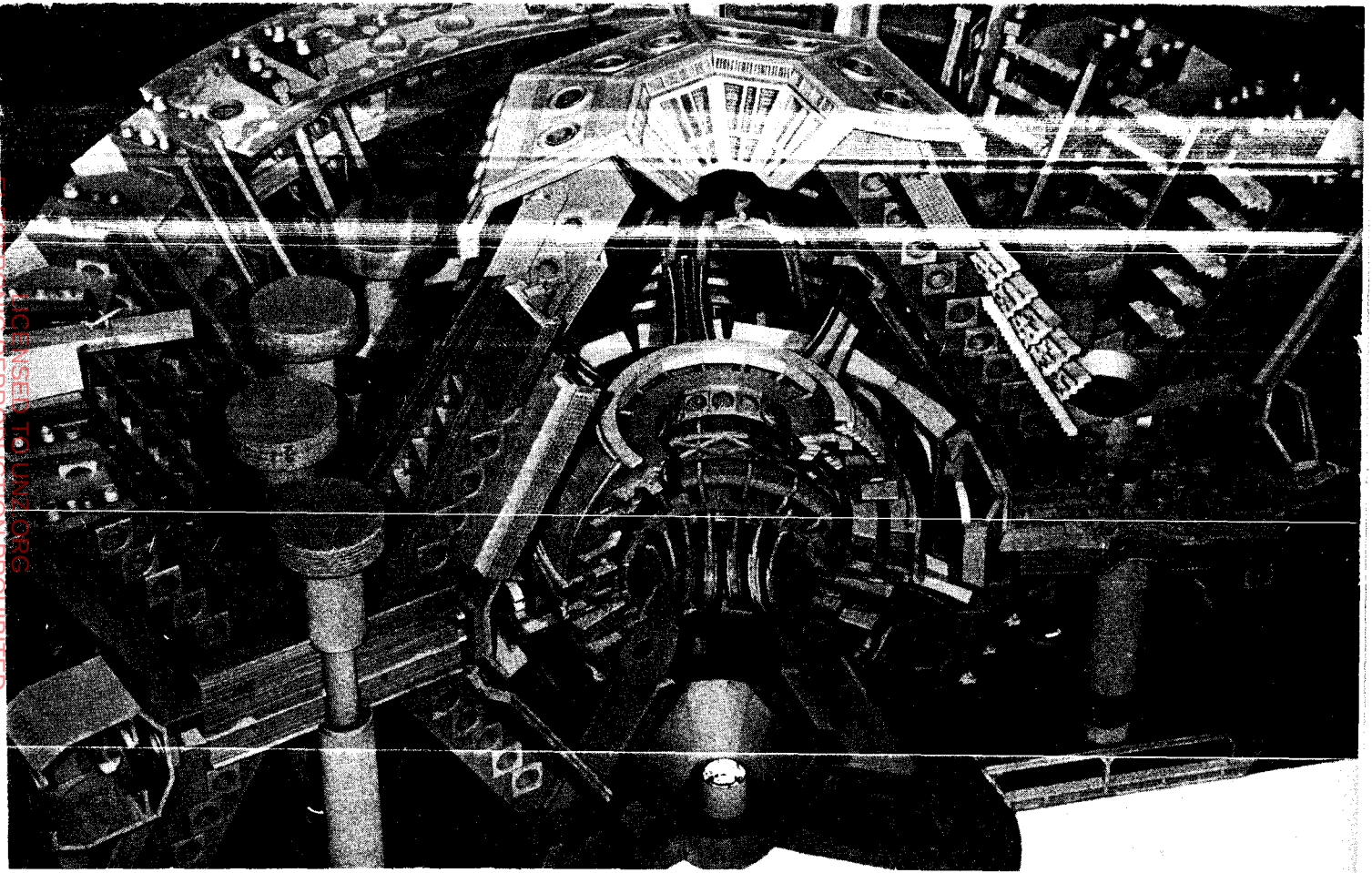

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structure (shown at bottom left) and services local, short-hop traffic.

Beyond the main airfield would stretch agricultural areas supplying the city with consumables, or the perimeter could be used for ecological preserves, wild-life sanctuaries or easily accessible recreational forests or other wilderness.

The distance from the outer taxi ring to the mile-diameter high-rise structure in the center ranges from three-quarters of a mile to a mile. The bleacherlike formations shown in the model as encircling the central structure house underground industrial plants and installations and would be surfaced by parks and gardens.

The photo on page 58 shows the high-rise complex—or the city proper—in more detail. Dwellings, neighborhoods, churches, small stores and playgrounds—facilities serving the intimate, familial functions of life—are contained on the outer surface or "skin" of the city. The inner core houses public structures—the university, schools, theaters and concert halls, other cultural centers, the financial district and administrative offices, hotels and the like.

3-D JERSEY so far is the only one of Mr. Soleri's containers of the condition of Man designed to meet a specific area problem pitched to him and involving outside agencies. The others were done as exercises using geometric forms to create compact situations fluid and flexible enough to adjust to the constantly changing survival demands of technological man.

Among the most striking of these is Babel Canyon, shown on page 60. Giant towers reach upward to a half-mile height to support slanting elements—canyons—in the airy center of the city. This arcology is designed to provide a virtually endless variety of buildings to suit individual tastes from vertical dwellings to sloping hillsides and split-levels and intimate neighborhoods.

"Arcologies are not self-contained, closed environments," says Robert L. Walker, Jr., one of Paolo Soleri's apprentices. "We're simply defining a very large, hopefully rationally organized container and then, within that container, the various spaces, buildings, functions and so forth would be made according to the needs and wishes of the society that would inhabit it."

Babel Canyon, towering upward from a base of 247 acres—less than one half a square mile—is designed to meet the needs and wishes of 250,000 inhabitants.

HEXAHEDRON lifts skyward for two-thirds of a mile from a surface area of a 140 acres (see photo on page 61), is intended to house 170,000 humans. The span of the structure, which consists of two pyramid shapes that are

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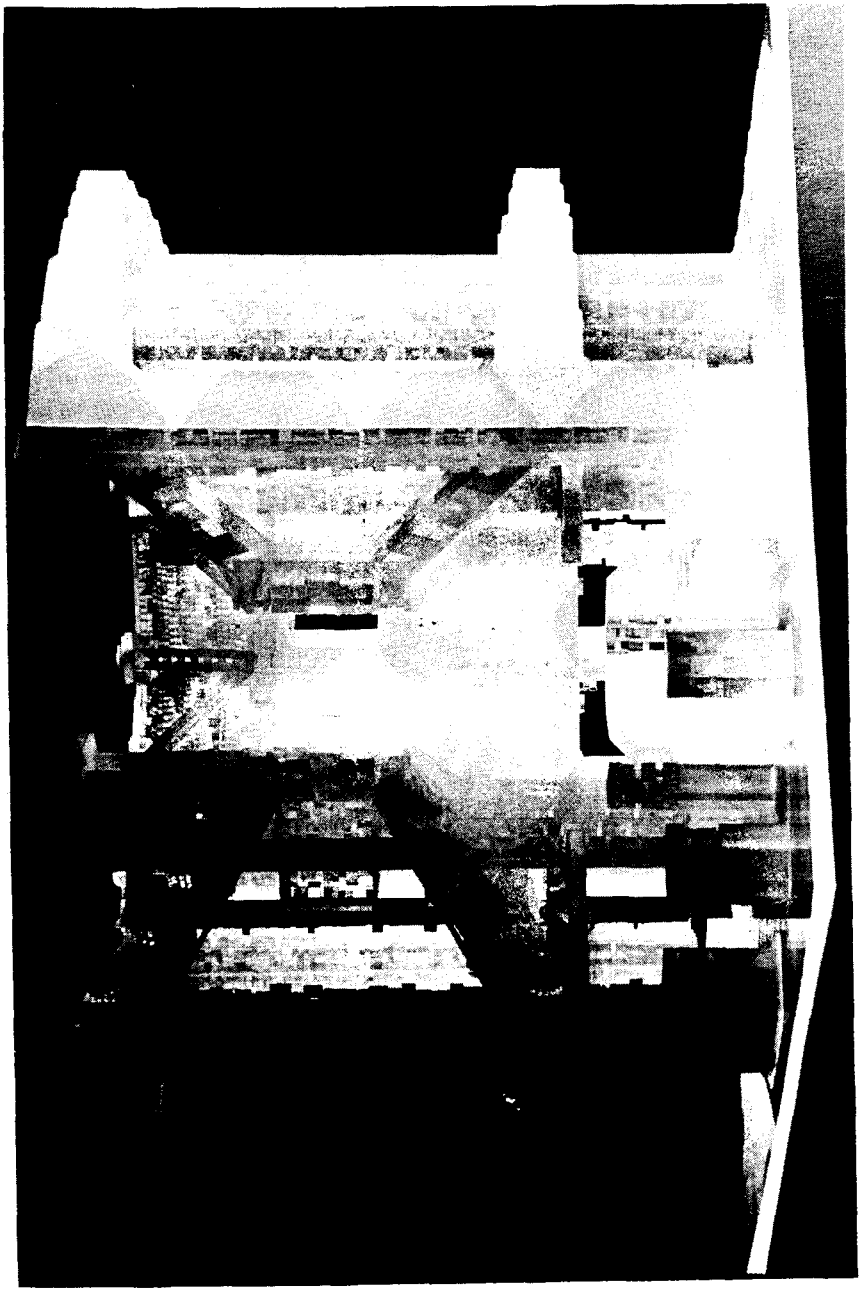

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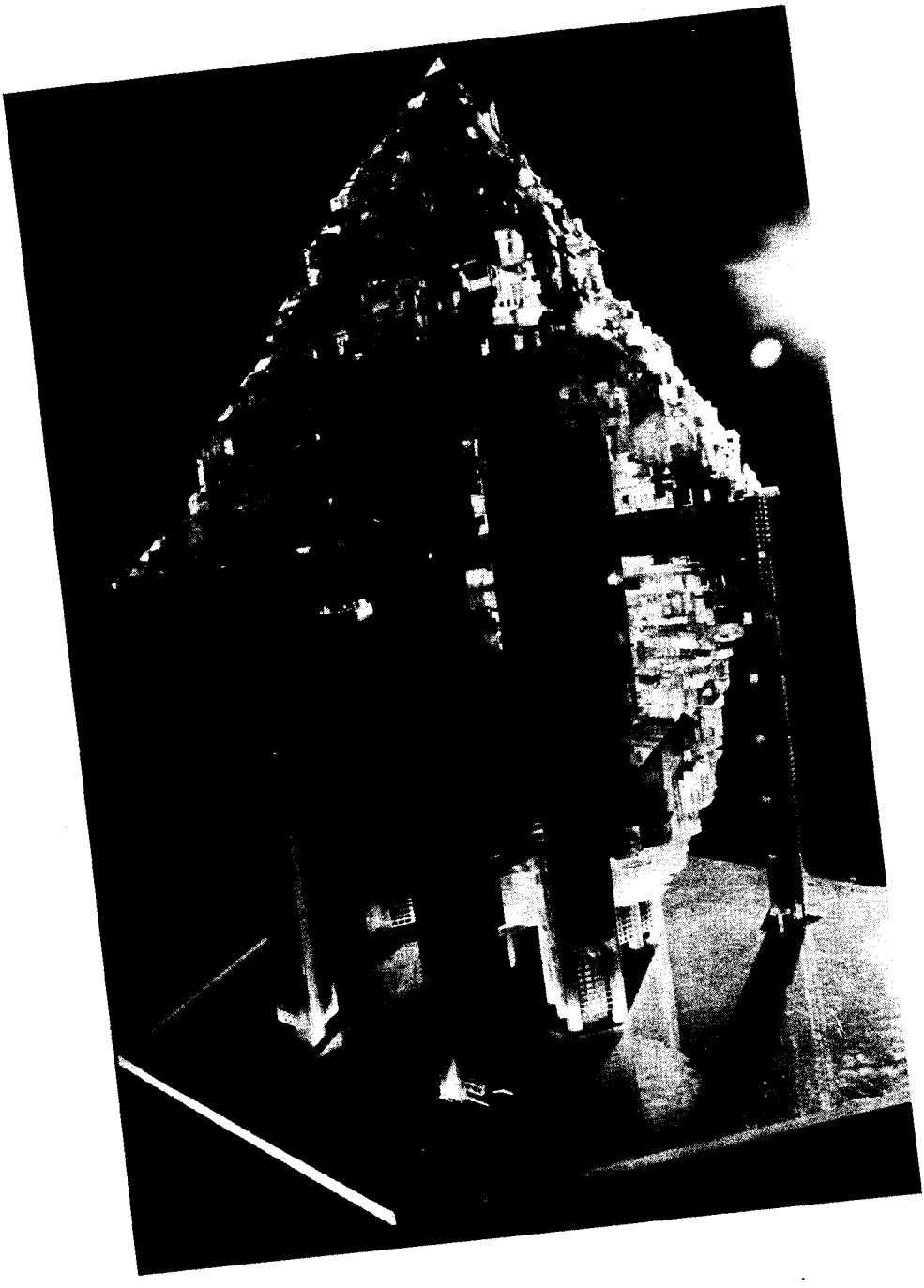

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skewed and supported on legs that also contain housing, is 1,000 feet. The pyramids are gigantic platforms and latticework into which a variety of buildings may be constructed. Again the outer surfaces of the arcology are designed for housing, gardens, playgrounds and neighborhoods and afford maximum air and sunlight.

Cultural, business, administrative, medical and educational facilities are designed to occupy the interior of Hexahedron and an interior transportation system consisting of walkways, bicycle paths, moving sidewalks, escalators and pneumatic tubes links the whole.

Hexahedron is also admirably designed, according to Mr. Walker, for recycling its own wastes and sewage to produce—for instance—electric power.

Collection is easy. "You're not dealing with laid-out, flat, horizontal systems and the possibilities of reusing the stuff are almost endless."

NONE of Mr. Soleri's giant arcologies has as yet attained structural reality, although his visionary designs have exploded dramatically on the speculative scene. Nor will they begin to house humans until many socio-economic and political attitudes change drastically. Exactly what changes are required will be tested, starting this year, in central Arizona.

Groundwork for the construction of the first modest arcology, Arcosanti, is scheduled to begin early this summer. Strictly an experimental project, Arcosanti (see photo on page 63) is designed to house from 2,500 to 3,000 people on ten acres of land situated in a wilderness preserve of 4,000 acres.

Again quoting Mr. Walker: "The idea is, we're trying to test the concept of putting a city or town or whatever—a complete urban environment—in a large, open park or preserve. It will allow people the option of having a city environment or raw nature."

The test is an important one—Mr. Soleri and his apprentices believe in an urban environment for Man. The rest of the 4,000 acres will be devoted to farming, recreation parks or just plain wilderness to increase the options. It is hoped that the project will invite as participants professional people—architects, engineers, economists and the like—who will be able to define new urban situations and build or design to meet them. Except for the container shown here, the purpose is to make Arcosanti a self-building city.

A kind of inevitability underlies many—if not most—of Paolo Saleri's concepts. "Miniaturization" is a key word that frequently and basically crops up in connection with his massive arcologies, which are basically conceived as social organisms following biological laws.

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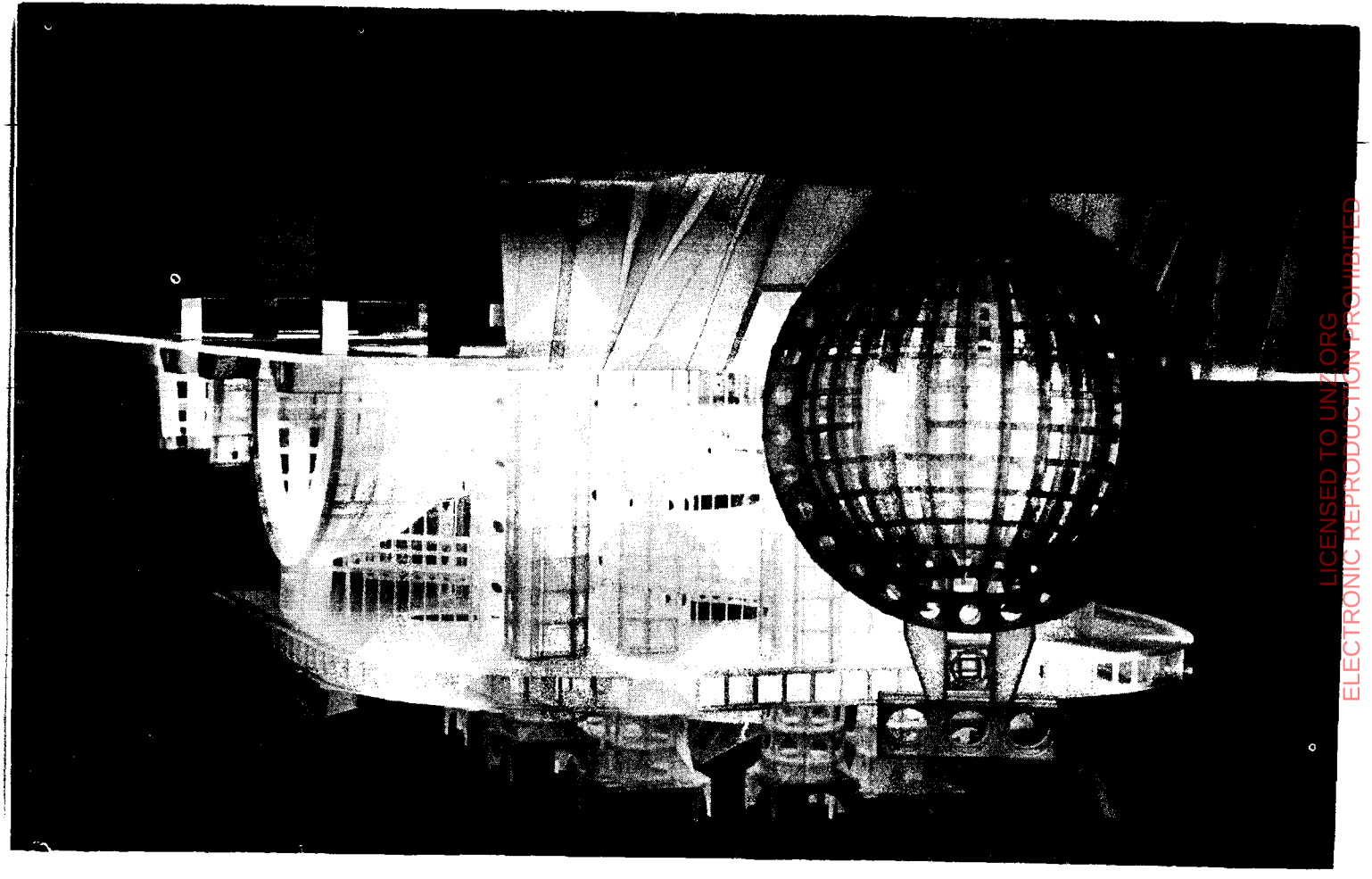

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"As any organism evolves," Mr. Walker quotes his mentor, "as it has more options—the structure in which it operates seems to implode."

The arcologies are not designed to expand physically.

"They're organized in the sense that, say, the human body is organized. It's very difficult for the human body to add another finger or to add another heart—this takes millions of years of evolution. These cities might be considered to be designed in such a way that their bones and nervous systems are defined. Then the skin and mind can go through almost infinite change, as in a human being. We're all organized in the same physical pattern but each of us is a separate individual, depending on how our senses and sensibilities develop. The concept can be applied to this organism called the city."

Perhaps the sense of inevitability one has about Mr. Soleri's arcologies derives from the fact they include containers for virtually every condition in which technological Man has found himself. Asteromo is a city in orbit—an asteroid designed to house indefinitely, under simulated Earth conditions, a population of about 70,000 people. "It is a double-skinned cylinder kept inflated by pressurization and rotation on its main axis. The inner skin is the ground on which man walks. It is lined with vegetation for food and the carbon dioxide-oxygen cycle . . ." Mr. Soleri writes in his book, *The City in the Image of Man*, recently published by M.I.T.

Then there are Novanoah I and Novanoah II for humans whose condition—by preference—is linked to the ocean. The first of these rises to a height of 1,000 meters—nicely more than a half-mile—above the surface of the ocean in which it floats on a wheel-like base of 6,800 acres. Mechanical facilities, industries, life-support systems, sea-farms and submarine harbors are designed below water level; housing, cultural, business and administrative centers above.

Novanoah II is a seagoing giant, based on a floating platform three miles across and reaching up to a mile in height. Its population is estimated at 2,400,000 and distribution of facilities is about the same as in Novanoah I.

Many of Mr. Soleri's "containers" are not only sociologically and spiritually but also technologically beyond the current condition of Man. We still lack know-how—some of Mr. Soleri's most massive urban organisms are intended to be fusion-powered—like having a little sun in your basement. Mr. Soleri does not present them as ultimate answers to Man's condition.

They are simply to indicate a possible direction.

And what would you say if someone were to ask you, *Why not?* ★

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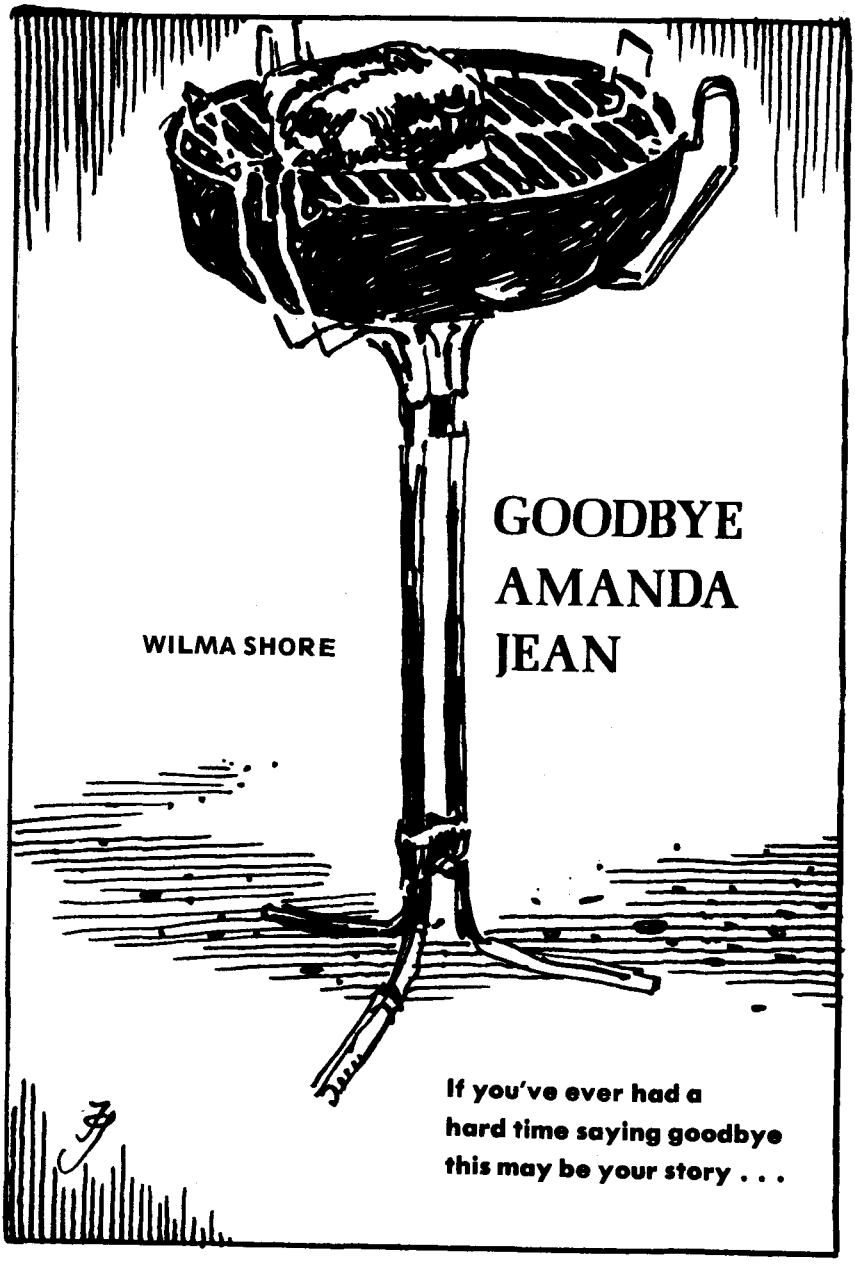

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JIM Hailey had to look all through the house before he found his wife. She was soaking in the tub; her clothes lay strewn across the bathroom floor. "Say, Mona, what's all that meat on the front porch?" he said, frowning. "Looks like hell."

She burst into tears. "That's not meat, that's Amanda Jean."

"You must be kidding," exclaimed Jim. "Is this some damn fool joke?"

"Joke!" She started to laugh. Jim could see she was close to hysteria; he got her out of the tub and into bed and brought her a drink of brandy.

"Now, tell me all about it," he said calmly, although he was very upset himself. Amanda Jean was his favorite daughter.

She took a deep, shuddering breath. "We were walking from the bus stop, along Elm. I met her downtown and we took the bus home together. And this. . . big station wagon draws up alongside, this fellow. . . leans out with his . . . gun—"

"What kind of gun?"

"You know I don't know one from the other!"

"Long barrel or— Never mind. What happened then?"

"He missed. I gave her a push. We started running. She was out ahead, she's so fast. Was so fast. I was trying to. . .get in the way, you know?"

Jim touched her hand.

"I know."

"We got to the cedar hedge. So then I knew if we once got across the Hursts' lawn we could duck back of the big willow into the patio and be—" her mouth had to work to form the word—"safe. And I thought, Jim was right to put the willow there. . ."

His hand twitched on hers. "But as soon as we reached the lawn she . . .went down. I tripped on her and I. . ."

Jim waited, stroking her arm. "There, there. You did everything you could." But his mind was not with her; his mind was out in the street, hearing the shot, seeing Amanda Jean fall, inventing a face for the man who shot her and trying to memorize the invented face, as though it were real; just to be doing something, anything.

"I crawled over, kind of laid across her. He said, 'Please look out.' I knew it was no use, but I just lay there, screaming, the way you do. So he pushed me aside. . ."

"You got off easy."

". . .and put another. . .shot in her neck."

"Not her head."

"Of course not! The head was what he *wanted*! I knew we should have cut her hair. I told you, remember? I said—"

"Go on, damn you!" he snarled.

She set up a wail.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Mona honey. Only when I feel so bad and then you say it's my fault—"

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THEY clung to each other. She was shaking. "It was a rifle. I can see the long barrel. . ."

"What did he look like? What kind of a looking fellow?"

"Why, do you know what he looks like. You know Lister Willings, from up the hill. That big house on Cerrito?"

"By sight. Not to speak to. Go on."

"Well, he carried her up on the porch and asked could I let him have a bucket of water and some newspaper. So I did and he cleaned it all up. Nice and neat, didn't you think?"

"Neat enough," he said. Her voice was fading and he needed a few more facts before she got to the end of her strength. "What did he take?"

"Well, the head, of course, and the patches. In this plastic carrying case? Then he asked did I want him to quarter the rest, and I. . .said yes. I didn't know *what* to say, and you weren't here. . .he would have carried them inside but I said no, I didn't want him in my house. So he took his case and his knives and left."

"And nobody came to give you a hand? None of the neighbors?"

"Louise Hurst came over, soon as he left. Then Mrs. Atterman. Helped me in, left a message for you at the office and all—but I sent them home, they have their dinner to fix. Jack Hurst'll be by when he sees your car. There's a new bottle of bourbon in the cupboard, underneath."

"Well, I'll be gone for a while." He found the sleeping pills and gave her two with a drink of water. "Just lie quiet and you'll drop off. I'll leave a note for the kids."

She brought his hand to her lips and lay back, eyes closed. He went downstairs and wrote the note, taping it to the refrigerator door so they would surely see it.

> SOME BASTARD KILLED YOUR SISTER AMANDA JEAN. MAMA ASLEEP, DO NOT DISTURB. GET YOURSELVES DINNER. BACK LATER. PA.

He spread a plastic dropcloth on the back seat of his car, piled Amanda Jean's quarters on it and drove down to the police station. But he could have saved himself the trouble. "Hell, Jim," said Captain Morck, "I feel really bad about this but you know it's the season. Here's a man got his permit and his license, she was fifteen years of age, not a darn thing in the world I can do."

"Shooting out of his station wagon?" cried Jim.

"Who says?"

"My wife was right there."

Dave Morck grabbed irritably at a fly. "It's up to you, Jim. You can bring a charge against him, get your wife up on the stand and put her through this awful experience all over again—and who's going to

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believe the girl's mother? And what's to stop him putting on a witness'll swear he was on foot?"

Jim knew Dave was talking sense but it made him wild. "Aren't you supposed to enforce the law? Didn't you take some kind of oath of office?"

"It's your wife," said Dave Morck. "You really want to put her through that, go ahead. And then what? Maybe he gets two years, out in ten months—that going to bring back your girl?"

"No." He slapped the desk, stood up slowly.

"Take it easy."

"Yeah." He walked out, making a brief gesture of greeting to Breierman and Foley. When he opened his car door he saw the flies on Amanda Jean and beat them off, swearing.

HE DROVE up to the Willings place, through the gates and around to the front, or what he took to be the front, since it was where the driveway went. It was a real modern house. He walked up to the door and rang, looking the place over out of habit; sixty thousand in the house, ten for the lot, another ten for the tennis court and pool and some kind of barbecue out back—he could smell the charcoal.

The door opened. A heavy-set man in a flowered sport shirt said, "Yes?"

"Willings? I'm Jim Hailey, down on Juanita and Elm."

"Oh!" said Willings. "That was your daughter?" He stood back. "Come on in."

It was a good-sized room, fireplace, ceramic tile floor. "What do you drink?"

"Not now, thanks."

"Sit down anyhow." Willings indicated a big leather chair.

"Can't stay. I've got her quarters out in the car. How come you left them? I smelled barbecue just now—you're not vegetarian. Didn't think she'd eat good?"

"Oh, sure, but I hoped you could use them. My freezer's full, been pretty lucky this year. Say, actually, you like something succulent? Remember last fall, they opened up the pre-schoolers down in San Felipe? I've still got a few chops, little boy about three and a half, cuts like butter."

"I have everything I need," said Jim. "But I'd surely appreciate it if you could spare Amanda Jean's trophies."

Willings clucked, frowning. "No can do. They're at Hamilton's already. I'll have him ship them over to you when they're mounted. He's putting them on a slab of Honduras mahogany, you'll have something really nice." He put up one hand. "My pleasure, don't mention it."

"I wasn't about to, you dirty bastard. Sweet talking me, but I know you got her with a rolling

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shot. Real rodeo rifle, aren't you, Willings?"

Willings flushed. "I'm afraid you've been misinformed, Mr. Hailey. I wouldn't do a thing like that."

"But you would call my wife a liar," Jim said gently.

"Look here, Hailey—" began Willings. "I invited you into my home, offered you a drink—"

"And a pound of kindergarten cutlets and a piece of Honduras mahogany. You must figure I'm looking to be paid for my own daughter." Willings opened his mouth but Jim cut him off. "You might as well fix me that drink."

Willings turned to the bar. Jim looked around till he found the door to the kitchen. The wife was shredding cabbage. "Beg pardon, Ma'am. Could I trouble you to step in here?"

She put down her knife and came in, looking from him to Willings. Willings reached toward his gun rack but Jim got him first. He fell back across the bar with a crash of breaking glass and slid tinkling to the floor.

JIM lowered the wife—widow—gently into a chair. "You saw it, Ma'am. You saw it was a legal kill."

She nodded.

When he brought back the vacuum she was still nodding. He slapped her sharply to bring her out of it—but then he was sorry he did, because all the time he was scalping Willings she made a real nuisance of herself.

"I know how you feel, ma'am," he said finally, "but I don't have all day. Got to get home, look after my kids." He got her back in the chair. "You ought to have somebody up here with you. You want me to call your people?"

He meant to do this right.

"No, I will," she said. He brought her the phone and she turned her head away and began talking in a low voice. When he was finished he went around and caught her eye, pointing to the quarters, but she shook her head, so he carried them out and dropped them in the back with Amanda Jean. He considered leaving his card in case she decided to sell—but then he figured to pass on the tip to Hank Schloss. He didn't want anything that would remind him of this day, not even a commission.

When he got home Mona was still asleep. The kids had fixed dinner and tidied up. They were good kids. He called Billy away from TV to help with the wrapping and freezing but after a few minutes he let him go—the poor kid's eyes filled with tears every time he looked at his sister's slender quarters.

Then he had a sandwich and a glass of beer and went to bed, although he did not fall asleep for the longest time.

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NEXT day he notified the school and the insurance company. Mona and the kids went through Amanda Jean's clothes and divided up her records and trinkets. It looked to Jim as if they were taking shifts crying—as soon as one dried up another started.

Then he thought he would just get past it, the way he did after Duane was shot—but maybe he was more attached to Amanda Jean than to Duane. Or maybe it was because he and Mona were older now, not likely to have any more kids. It was over and done with—her trophies were up over the mantel, Willings' scalp was cured and hung on the knotty pine scalp rack in the office; still he would be showing a property and his mind would go slipping away to the Willings house, with the crash of glass, the smell of blood and whiskey, the feel of Willings' bald spot under his fingers during the scalping.

And still he kept seeing her out of the corner of his eye. But it was always one of the other girls.

HE WASN'T eating right or sleeping right. Mona kept after him but he didn't want to talk about it—it made him feel like a fool. Then one morning as he was leaving for the office she said, "Honey, I made a date for you to see Dr. Peabody."

He just stood and stared at her and she got flustered. "Well, not really a date. He said he'd be working on his sermon this afternoon if you wanted to drop by. But I can call and break it—"

He picked up his jacket. "Seems as if you did enough talking about me already. *I'll* call."

And he meant to. But as the morning wore on he got to wondering what Dr. Peabody would say when he heard the whole story—and after lunch Jim stopped by to tell it to him.

Dr. Peabody didn't say a thing, just took off his glasses, turned them around and stared at them as if they were someone else's eyes. Jim sat forward. "Now, wasn't that wrong, Dr. Peabody? A person might close their eyes to the illegal shot, if it was a fellow needed food. But to drive off and leave her, all but the trophies—don't you say it was wrong?"

Dr. Peabody's uncovered eyes looked large and soft. "Of course there's a line between right and wrong. But it isn't straight and sharp, like a property line. It doesn't even stand still. It's more like the wet line that runs down the beach after a wave breaks. Ever watch? Then there's another wave and another wet line. Was it higher or lower this time? Is the tide coming in or going out?" Jim wasn't sure what Dr. Peabody was getting at, but he nodded politely. "Take your kill, Jim. Of Mr. Willings. Was that right?"

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"It was a one hundred per cent legal kill," said Jim. "Over and above that, it was to up*hold* the law. If more people would get out and do like I did, we could get the guns out of the cars and give our girls a sporting chance."

"I didn't ask if it was legal. I asked if it was right."

"It surely was!"

"Would you be here if you really believed that?" said Dr. Peabody quietly.

"What?" said Jim. He felt confused.

Dr. Peabody put his glasses on again—now his eyes were smaller, farther away.

"Jim. You killed in anger—did you not?"

"I never!" cried Jim. "I was cool as a butcher."

★★★GALAXY STARS★★★

"To be born as I was," says Anne McCaffrey, "on April first, imposes a challenge. In writing speculative fiction, I feel I have not failed the auspices of my natal day.

"However, being 99 percent Irish indicates a certain perversity, so I tried out many things before I settled down to write. I dabbled in the theater arts and studied voice production for nine years before arriving at the horrifying conclusion that I was a better stage director than a singer.

"I balance indifferent housekeeping with superb cooking, knit well—and (would you believe?) embroider—swim, sail, ride horseback (western style by preference), collect Graustarkian romances and resent being kept away from my typewriter by any of the above-mentioned diversions. Am currently raising five cats, a French poodle and three children—though 'child' hardly describes my 6'3" eldest son. He's seventeen and heading for college. No. 2 boy is an avid SF reader who uses my IBM to write long obscure SF stories (he's never recovered from being the 'Todd' in *Decision at Doona*); and my darling daughter, Georgeanne, grows in beauty, wisdom and inches along with other lovely young plants—i. e., wolfbane.

"I have been Secretary-Treasurer of the Science Fiction Writers of America for two years and am ardently looking for someone who'll take over so I can rest on my laurels. There are two awards and five novels to my credit, and I'm working on a sequel to *Dragonflight* at present.

"My eyes are green, my hair is silver and I freckle. The rest is subject to change without notice."

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"Ah?" said Dr. Peabody. "Well, then, I must be mistaken. I suppose you've eaten him."

Jim looked at Dr. Peabody's chin. "I don't know. Maybe. Mona handles all that."

"Did you eat him, Jim?"

"No, sir," he muttered.

"Why not?"

Jim looked away, up one wall of Dr. Peabody's study and down the other. "Why not, Jim?"

Jim looked down at his hands.

"Then, of course, you had no right to take his life. And you know it, don't you? In your heart. Don't you, Jim?"

All of a sudden he felt something snapping inside his chest, as if a great big rubber band had been holding him together. He walked to the door, tried to speak—and just went on out. He drove over to the far side of the golf course and sat in his car crying for about half an hour.

Then he went home and made himself a drink and began taking quarters out of the freezer.

"Call the gang," he told Mona. "Barbecue tomorrow."

Mona looked at him and kept her mouth shut. She was a really good wife.

NEXT morning early he started the fire and trimmed out the meat. Then he mixed up his own special sauce and began basting. He used a child's toy broom that he kept for barbecues. Once or twice he had a call from the office but mostly he just stood around painting on sauce and fussing with the fire.

That night Hank Schloss said it was the best he ever ate. "Only I wish I had a few days notice, so's I could have worked up a real appetite! What came over you all of a sudden?"

"Why, Hank, you ought to know," said Jim, "there's three things a man don't like to hang around and wait for, once he gets the notion—and two of them's barbecue!" They all laughed.

But in fact he ate very little. And even so he was up most of the night, puking.

But next morning when he came downstairs he felt it was going to be all right. He stopped at the stove and laid his cheek against Mona's and she reached around and patted his shoulder with the oven mitt.

On his way to the office he stopped at the Peabody's and dropped off two fine rib roasts out of his freezer.

"Your very own girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Peabody. "I *am* touched! And what joy to have something *tender*, for a change!" She clapped her hand over her mouth. "Aren't I awful, talking like this? When people are so kind and generous about sharing with us? But you know, it generally turns out to be somebody's old aunt, for braising." ★

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THE ALL-AT-ONCE MAN

R.A. LAFFERTY

"I've decided not to die in the natural order of things," John Penandrew said. "The idea appeals to me strongly..."

I

... let him know that the word translated 'everlasting' by our writers is what the Greeks term aionion, *which is derived from* aion, *the Greek for* Saeculum, *an age. But the Latins have not ventured to translate this by* secular, *lest they should change the meaning into something widely different. For many things are called secular which so happen in this world as to pass away even in a short time; but what is termed* aionion *either has no end, or lasts to the very end of this world.*

THE CITY OF GOD—SAINT AUGUSTINE

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THIS is an attempt to assemble such facts (hard and soft) as may yet be found about a remarkable man who seemed to be absolutely balanced and integrated, yet who developed a schizo-gash deep as a canyon right down the middle of his person. Dr. George Drakos says that he developed three or four such schizo-gashes.

This is also an attempt to record some of the strange goings-on in the house on Harrow Street —and it is a half-hearted (no, a faint-hearted or downhearted) attempt to record the looser goings-on in the subsequently forever house on Harrow Street. The subject is a man who had everything, took hold of something beyond that and was broken to pieces by it. Or was not.

"I want to be the complete man," John Penandrew used to say to himself. "I want to be the complete man," he would say to all of us who would hear him. Well, he was already the most complete man that any of us had ever seen. He had been a promising young man: as Don Marquis has said of himself, and had been a promising young man for twenty years. But Penandrew didn't show those twenty years at all, except in his depth.

His eyes, his shape, his everything was just as all had been when he left Monica Hall twenty years before: he had been a gilded youth then—or at least he had been plated over with a very shiny substance. He still was, he was still that youth, but in his depth he was a full man, sure and mature, and with the several appearances together and unconflicting. For he was also the boy he had been thirty years before, in no detail changed. He had been a loud-mouthed kid, but smart all the time and smooth when he wanted to be. Now there was a boy, a youth and a man, three non-contradictory stages of him looking out of his gray eyes. His complexity impressed me strongly. And it also impressed four men who were not as easily impressed as I was.

There were five men who knew everything; and there was myself. We met loosely two or three times a year. The five men who knew everything were this John Penandrew (he was in banks as his father had been); Dr. George Drakos, who was Greek and who used to go to Greek school in the evenings; Harry O'Donovan, who was a politician as his fathers had been forever; Cris Benedetti, an ex-seminarian who taught literature and esoterica at the university; and Barnaby Sheen, who was owner of the Oklahoma Seismograph Enterprizes.

These five men were all rich, and they all knew everything. I wasn't and I didn't. I belonged to the loose group by accident: they had never noticed that I alone had not become rich or that there were

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evident gaps in my information.

We had all gone to school twenty years before to the Augustinians at Monica Hall and minds once formed by the Augustinians are Augustinian forever. We had learned to latch onto every sound idea and intuition and to hold on forever. At least we had more scope than those who went to school to the Jesuits or the Dominicans. This information is all pertinent. Without the Augustinian formation John Penandrew would never have shattered—he'd have bent.

"I'VE decided not to die in the natural course of things," John Penandrew said softly. The other four of those men who knew everything didn't seem at all surprised.

"You've given enough thought to it, have you?" Cris Benedetti asked him. "That's really the way you want it?"

"Yes, that's the way I want it," John Penandrew said. "And I've considered it pretty thoroughly."

"You've decided to live forever then, have you?" Barney Sheen asked with just a hint of boyish malice.

"Naturally not to live forever here," Penandrew attempted to explain. "I've decided to live only as long as the world lasts, unless I am called from my plan by peremptory order. I am resolved, however, to live for very many normal lifetimes. The idea appeals to me strongly."

"Have you decided just how you will bring this about?" Dr. George Drakos asked.

"Not fully decided. I've begun to consider that part only recently. Of first importance is always the decision to do a thing. The means of carrying it out will have to follow that decision and flow from it. There is no real reason why I shouldn't be able to do it, though."

"No, I suppose not," Cris Benedetti said thoughtfully. "You're an intelligent man and you're used to tall problems. But there have been other intelligent men and, as far as I know, none of them has done this thing."

"Do you know of any really intelligent man who has decided to do this and then has failed in the doing?" Penandrew asked.

"No, not if you put it that way," Cris admitted. "Most problems remain unsolved simply because they have never been tried seriously and in the proper framework. And there are legends of men (I presume them to have been intelligent) who have done this thing and are doing it. Not very reputable legends, though."

"Well, what is it then, an elixir of youth that you'll be seeking?" Harry O'Donovan asked in his high voice.

"No, Harry, that idea is clearly unworkable. It couldn't be taken

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seriously by anyone except a youth," Penandrew talked it out carefully. "It will not be an elixir of youth: it will be an elixir of all ages—that, I believe, is the crux of the matter. I do not want to be only a youth forever or for a very long time—I am more than just a youth now. It would not be possible to remain a youth forever."

"Then what?" O'Donovan demanded. "I don't believe you've thought this out very thoroughly, John. Do you want to live for a very long time and you getting older and older and older all that time?"

"But I have thought it out pretty thoroughly, Harry. I will get old only at one end, only in depth. I will become a complete man—and then still more complete. I believe there is no record of any really complete man's ever dying—that's the thing."

"I believe there is no record of any complete man at all," George Drakos said. "That's really the thing."

"There's probably been a large handful of us," Penandrew said. "I know pretty well what I want to do and I know pretty well what it consists of. I will become every aeon of myself simultaneously; then I will have become a complete man—and then I will not die. There is a meaning within a meaning of the old word aeon. Aeon means ages. But the pleroma or plentitude is made up of substantial powers called aeons. I maintain that these two meanings are the same. In Gnosticism the aeon is one of the group of eternal beings that combine to form the supreme being—all are eternal and simultaneous but no one of them would be eternal out of combination. I believe that there is analogy on the human plain; and I intend to become that analogy, to be all my ages simultaneously and forever, to be every aeon of myself. I will be forever a boy, forever a youth, forever a man and forever an old man. I'm already something of this multiple appearance, I'm told. I guarantee that I'll be a boy forever. I'll nail down that end."

"And what happens when the old man in you gets older and older and dies?" Drakos said.

"I don't know what will happen but I'm certainly interested in knowing, George. Possibly I will assume a still older man and then a still older. I'm not sure there is a necessary connection between very old age and death. It may be, though, that the extreme aeons of me will pass over the edge and give me a foot in each world. I'd like that. The possibilities are almost endless. But I believe that the boy in me, the youth in me, the man in me will live for innumerable lifetimes."

"Oh brother!" Harry O'Donovan sounded in his high voice. "And how will you be doing it all? Not by talking about it, I'll bet."

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"Yes, I will do it by considerable talking about it and by much more thinking about it," Penandrew ventured. "It is not a thing for gadgets or apparatuses, though I may employ them some. It is a thing, I believe, of mental and physical disposition and I tell you that I'm well disposed toward it."

THIS John Penandrew who lived in the big house on Harrow street was married to Zoe Archikos. Barny Sheen would like to have been married to her. So would Cris Benedetti and Harry O'Donovan. So would George Drakos except that she was his cousin. Zoe was a creature that has become fairly rare these last twenty-five centuries: a blonde Grecian, a veritable Helen, a genuinely classic model with that brassiness that must go with it. The bronze age understood the necessity of this high brass, but we have forgotten.

Oh, she was form and life, she was perfection and brindled passion—and she was also the blast of a brass horn. John Penandrew was fortunate in having her; she should have been elixir enough for anyone. But he was fortunate in almost everything.

"THE fathers tell us that Adam, in his preternatural state, enjoyed all ages at once," Barney Sheen said, "so it is not strictly true that he had no childhood, even though he was created adult. He was created all ages at once. It was a good trick till he broke it. And, by coincidence, I recently ran into the still surviving legend of the one man who, since Adam, is most persistently believed to have been all ages at once and to be still alive."

"Coincidence, which is simultaneity, is valid when it touches a simultaneous man as I am becoming," John Penandrew said with what would have been pomposity in another man. "Ah—where did you run into the latest legend of Prester John, Barney?"

"In Ethiopia. I have several crews doing petroleum exploration work there and I visited there recently. Some of the simple local workmen talk of the everlasting man as if he were a present-day presence."

"Near Magdala, was it?" John Penandrew asked with sudden eagerness.

"About seventy miles northwest of there, on the Guna slopes."

"I was sure it was near. Magdala, of course, is a modern name-form of old Mogadore, the legendary kingdom of Prester John."

"That's impossible," George Drakos cut in. "Anyone with even an elementary knowledge of the Amharic language would know that the one name could not change into the other."

"Anyone with even an elementary knowledge of anything would

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know that both names are from the Geez and not the Amharic language," Cris Benedetti sneered, "and there is a strong possibility that the two names are the same, George."

(It is sometimes confusing to have these acquaintances who know everything.)

"But *you* can't do it, John, in Ethiopia or anywhere; you can't be the simultaneous man," Cris continued. "You haven't the integrity for it."

"Why not, Cris? I pay tithes of cummin and that other stuff. I love my wife and many other persons. I have a pleasant way with my money and I do not grind the faces of the poor. Why haven't I integrity?"

"You have common decency, John, but not integrity," Cris said. "I use the word to mean unified totality and scope—that is integrity in the theological sense. I use the word as Tanquerey uses it."

(They used to study Tanquerey's Dogmatic Theology in the seminaries. Now they study rubbish.)

"There are several ways I can go about this," Penandrew said. "I believe that we originally had this simultaneity and everlastingness as a preternatural gift. Then we were deprived of it. But it remains a part of our preternatural nature. This means that we must be deprived of it all over again every day or it will flow back into us. It could be as simple a thing as actinic rays depriving us of this handy gift of everlasting life. I've studied these possibilities a little. I could have a series of silver plates or baffles set into my head to combat the rays. That's one way."

"What's the other ways?" Barney Sheen asked.

"Oh, proper disposition of mind and body. Induced mystic states combined with my natural powers and proclivities. I believe that there may be gadgetry employed as a trigger—but only as a trigger for the alteration. I believe that it will be mostly realizing a state of being that already belongs to us, something that belongs to our preternatural nature."

"Or our unnatural nature," Barney said. "You didn't use to play so loose with words. What's the other way, John?"

"Oh, I may go and find Prester John and learn how he's been doing it these thousands of years," John Penandrew said. "And I will go and do likewise."

"Did you ever hear anything like that, Laff?" Barney asked me. "Has the subject ever been handled in your—ah, pardon my smile—field?"

"Several stories have handled the subject," I said, "but not in the variation that Penandrew wants to give it."

II

Saying: O grandfather,
the little ones have nothing of

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which to make a symbol.
He replied, saying:
. . .they shall make of me
their symbol.
. . .the four divisions of days
(stages of life)
they shall enable themselves
to reach and enter. . .
LEGENDS. APPENDIX TO A DICTIONARY OF THE OSAGE LANGUAGE—FRANCIS LA FLESCHE

JOHN PENANDREW was out of town for about a year. When he came back he had a different look to him. Oh, he had simultaneity now! He really had it. He was the boy he had been thirty years ago; he was the youth he had been twenty years ago; he was the man he should have been now and he was also an older man. He was all these several persons or ages at once, much more than he had been before—all of them, completely and unconflictingly. He had pulled it off. He was truly the simultaneous man. But that isn't exactly what we mean when we say that he had a different look to him.

In all his simultaneous persons he had something just a little bit lopsided about him. One eye was always just a little bit larger than the other. There was more than a hint of deformity and there shouldn't have been this in a complete man.

But he was the complete man now. He had done it. He had pulled the coup. He was wound up all the way and he would live forever unless he flew apart. This was no fakery. You could feel that he had done it.

He lived in the big house on Harrow Street with the brassy classy Zoe and they lived it to the hilt. There wasn't ever anyone in such a hurry to have so much fun so fast. They were perfervid about it. But why should he be in such a hurry when he had forever?

Well, he had money and he had talent and he had Zoe. The boy was strong in him now (he had been a loud-mouthed kid but smart all the time and smooth when he wanted to be); the youth was in him very strong (he had been a gilded youth or at least a very brassy one); and the man and the older man were vital and shouting in him. The Penandrews were cutting a wide swath and they were much in the papers. But what was John's big hurry now?

"Add one dimension, then you might as well add another." He grinned with a grin a little too lopsided for a complete and simultaneous man. "Speed, that's the thing. Speed forever and lean heavy on that hooting horn."

But it was another year before myself and those five men who knew everything were all together again.

JOHN PENANDREW lolled with his lopsided grin as though

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he were too full of mischief to talk. And Barnaby Sheen wound into one of his cosmic theses, of which he had hundreds:

"Just before the Beginning there was a perfect sphere and no other thing." Barney spoke in his rich voice. "At least it supposed itself to be a perfect sphere—it had no imperfect spheroid with which to compare itself. It suspected that it was revolving at a very high rate of speed, such a rate of speed that it would immediately fly apart if the rotation could be established as fact. But in relation to what point could it be rotating?

"It was not in space—there was no space beyond it; how could there be? It could not be in motion, of course, there being nothing relative to it. Neither could it be at rest—in relation to what could it be at rest? It was not in time nor in eternity, there being nothing to pose it against in either aspect. It had no size, for there was nothing to which it might be compared—it might be a pinhead in size, or a mega-megalo. It had no temperature, it had no mass, it had no gravity—all of these things are relative to other things.

"Then an exterior speck appeared. This was the Beginning, not the sphere's lone existence. The mere speck was less than one billionth to the billionth power the diameter of the sphere and was at much more than a billion billions of diameters from it. Now there was both contrast and relationship.

"Now there was size and mass and temperature, space, time and motion; for there was something to relate to. The sphere was indeed found to be in furious and powerful rotation, now that it could rotate in relation to something. It was in such rapid rotation that it deformed itself with its own centrifugal force, it ruptured itself, it flowed apart completely and everything thence is from its pieces.

"What happened to the speck? Was it consumed in the great explosion? Probably not. Likely it had never existed at all. It was a mere illusion to get things started. Say, I consider that an excellent 'In the Beginning' bit. Can you use that, Laff? Can you make a piece out of that piece?"

"I will use it some day," I said.

"The important thing about that speck was its duration." John Penandrew licked the words out with a tongue that now seemed a little lop-sided. "It lasted for much less than a billionth of a billionth of a second. It was in contrast to the short-duration speck that the then-happening cosmos acquired its delusion of immortality."

"You are sure it is a delusion, Pen?" Cris Benedetti asked anxiously, as though much depended on the answer.

"Yes, all a delusion," Penandrew grinned. "We cosmic types call it the workable delusion, and we will work it for all it is worth."

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"Tell us the truth, Penandrew," Barnaby Sheen said gruffly. "Did you really do it? And how did you do it?"

"I really did it, Barney. I'll not die. I'll dance on your graves and on the graves of your great-great-grandchildren. I'll make a point of it. I'll dance naked on the graves as David danced before the Ark."

"Why such frenzied pleasure in our going, Pen?" Cris asked with some hurt.

"It's the boy in me. He's a bit monstrous now and he's me. I can't change him or any of us or it will all collapse. It's mine. I'll hang onto it. I'll bow my back. I won't give an inch ever. I've got a mind-set in me now—that's a big part of it."

"Yes, I believe you did pull it off, Penandrew," Barney said slowly. "How did you do it, though? By elixir? By plates against the rays? By Prester John's secret? How?"

"Oh yes, I finally lifted the secret from Prester John himself and now I will not die in the natural course of things. But I'll not tell you about it. You don't need to know about it. Why should you want to know?"

"We also might want to avoid dying in the natural course of things," Doctor George Drakos said softly.

"No, no, that's impossible," Penandrew shouted. "I won't be done out of it by anyone. I'll hold onto it for dear life—and that is exactly the case of it."

"Is it an exclusive thing?" Harry O'Donovan asked, "and it can't be shared?"

"It cannot be shared," Penandrew said harshly. "It isn't anything like you think it is. It isn't at all as I thought it might be. It became a freak in its general withdrawal. It's a jealous thing. It's a snake in the hand and it must be held tightly. It isn't the preternatural thing I thought it would be. It's an unnatural thing now—and only one person in the world can have it at a time, for all time. I won't let go of it. Hack my hands off—but I won't let go of it!"

"How *is* Prester John?" Barney Sheen asked in a strong low tone.

"Oh, leave off the legends," Harry O'Donovan sounded angrily. "If there was a Prester John ever—he's been dead these thousand years."

"No. About eighteen months," Penandrew said. "I found him alive. And now he is dead."

"You killed him," Barney said simply.

"How would I kill him?" Penandrew protested. "He died of old age and God knows that that is the truth. He crumbled to dust. Why should he not have died of old age? Do you know how long he had been around? He saw Rome fall. And Jerusalem."

"What did you take from him?" Barney Sheen asked.

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"I took the jealous thing, the only thing. And now I will not die in the natural course of things. He wanted me to take it. He had been trying to give it to someone for a long time."

"That is the truth?" Sheen asked.

"That is the truth," Penandrew said. And it was the truth, we all knew that, but it was a lopsided truth. Penandrew left us suddenly then.

"May the sun come up on him crooked in the morning," Harry O'Donovan said bitterly.

But in the big house on Harrow Street, John and Zoe Penandrew lived it up to the haft. It was speed forever and lean heavy on the hooting horn. There was something a little disreputable about the couple now—if that word can be used of rich and positioned people.

John grew older only in the old man of him. The boy in him was still the boy, the youth still the youth, the man still the man. He was living at least four lives at once, all at high speed and all forever. Zoe became more buxom and more classic, more brassy, more lively. If she aged at all she did it entrancingly and disgracefully—but not ungracefully. There was nobody like her. She was full and overflowing, always.

All the fun that could be crammed into every day and night! Speed, and the dangerous teetering that goes with very high speed. They went on forever.

Actually they went on for ten years. Then Zoe left him and he broke up.

No. He broke up first and then she left him.

"I lost it," he said, "and I couldn't have. Nobody could ever have got it out of my grip."

III

For his duration too there is a word—the word Aevum or Aeviternity, the duration of that in which its essence or substance knows no change: though by its accidents it can know change...

THEOLOGY AND SANITY—
F.J. SHEED

IT WAS then that the doings in the house on Harrow Street took a peculiar turn. Things had been hectic when Zoe was there; they had been noisy and publicized. But, whatever Zoe was, she was always High Brass. She'd had class. Now the house and happenings degenerated.

John Penandrew brought those three nephews of his into the big house to live with him. They were a crass bunch. There was something pretty low about them, and they brought John pretty low. A man should not be ashamed of his poor relations, of course: he should help them if they need help;

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and perhaps it was the essence of charity that John should take them into his own house. John had real charity in his heart; there is no taking that away from him. He also had baser things there and they began to pour out of it now. The three nephews were bums and John Penandrew became a bum along with them. Rich bums are the worst kind.

And there was no doubting the kinship. All three of the fellows had the family look strongly. They were loudmouths, as John had always been a little—but they were not smart and they were not smooth, as John could be when he wished. They all had what I can only call a facial deformity and they had it to a grotesque degree where John had it only to a minor extent. It was that lopsided look. It was that one eye bigger than the other. Coming out of that clan, John Penandrew came by his own slight deformity honestly.

There were low-life doings at the big house on Harrow Street. The four Penandrew males each seemed to bring in seven cronies worse than himself. There were riotous doings there and the black maria was a frequent visitor to those doors. There was the aroma of stale evil in all this and John hadn't used to be a bad sort of man.

John Penandrew talked rationally but sadly whenever we came across him.

"I should never have taken the thing," he said. "I knew before I finally seized it that it was wrong and unnatural. And, having taken it, I should have been willing to let it go easier when I found what deformity it really was. 'The corruption of the best is the worst—' do you remember when we were taught that? This excellent gift was taken away from us long ago, and for a reason. I had it as a tainted and forbidden remnant, and I held onto it like a snake in the hand. But I will not easily give up any strong idea that I have held. I have an intransigent mind. Do you remember when we were taught to have *that*? I held it too tight, and it shattered me."

And in fact John Penandrew was a shattered man now—or a splattered one. The sap had been all drained out of him, as though the nephews were sapsuckers or bloodsuckers who preyed on him. He weathered badly. Now he looked older than he was and he no longer looked all ages at once. He aged monstrously—he leered and lolled. He seemed to be returning to most unaromatic dust.

He had given up his chairmanships of the boards and his associations with the banks. It was their loss. He had always been very smart in matters of business and policy. He knew that that was finished with him now. He took his money and went home.

And that home was a shipwreck.

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The middle nephew was as queer as a glass-egg goose. He had a stack of morals charges against him and John Penandrew had thousands of dollars of bond out on him. He was an almost personable fellow, but he was slanted—how he was slanted!

The youngest nephew was no more than a boy—a cat-killing, window-breaking, arsonous vandal who led a wild pack and always left a trail right up to the Harrow Street house. What things he got away with because he was not yet adult! And him much more intricate than the adults who had to deal with him and much more deadly—it is pretty certain that he killed larger and higher things than cats and broke more fragile things than windows.

The oldest nephew, a twisted humorist, an almost good fellow, was the instigator of the endless series of sick parties held in the big house, the procurer of the dozen or so florid witches who always came with the dark. He was an experimenter in the vices, an innovator of reputation.

John Penandrew had become an old and dirty caricature of himself. There was something artificial about him now, as though he were no more than a mask and effigy propped up on a display float at some garish carnival. The shape he was in, John Penandrew surely could not go on forever and he didn't.

After about three years of cohabitation with the nephews, John Penandrew died. That should have wrecked the legend. Maybe not, though. Well, it really seemed that he did *not* die in the natural course of things. There was something most unnatural about the course of his dying, as though he had turned to dust before he died; as though what died was not himself at all; as though the dying were an incident, almost an afterthought.

He wasn't much more than fifty years old. He looked ninety. Zoe didn't come to the funeral.

"He isn't in very good shape right now," she said. "I'll wait a few months, and then go back to him when things are looking a little better with him." She wasn't at all distraught; she was just not making sense. She left the country the night before the funeral.

AFTER the funeral mass, after the Zecharih Canticle when the body is taken out from the church, Barnaby Sheen whispered to the priest in the vestibule:

"I don't believe you've got him all there."

"I don't believe so either," the priest whispered back.

Zoe inherited.

The nephews? No, they didn't get anything.

There was something a little bit loose about those nephews. They weren't—ah—seen again. No trace was found of them, either back-

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ward or forward. They simply hadn't been. In the legal and recorded sense, at least, John Penandrew hadn't had any nephews. He had had attributes, we suppose, but not nephews. Well, peace to the pieces of the poor rich man!

IT'S a moral paradigm, really, of a man who reached for too much and was shattered by it. It's a neat instance of final moral compensation and seemliness. Yes, except that it wasn't neat; that this wasn't the final part of it; and that the compensation was not particularly moral.

It was not neat because there were pieces left sticking out of it—a primordial brass horn that surely wasn't Gabriel's; and three, at least, noisy persons in the house on Harrow Street.

But it was not stated that the nephews were not heard from again. They *were* heard. Oh how they were heard! They were the noisiest unbodied bodies that ever assaulted honest ears. They and their florid witches (unseen also) made the nights—well—interesting for quite some months in that long block on Harrow Street.

This was the first phase of the Haunted House in Harrow Street. It was featured in Sunday supplements everywhere, likely in your own town paper. It was included in books like *Beyond the Strange*. It became a classic instance.

And that was only the first phase of the Haunted House episode. The next phase was not so loudly trumpeted (don't *use* that word in this case) to the world. There was a tendency to play it down. It was too hell-fire hot to handle.

Zoe came back to town, bright and big and brassy as ever. A classic personage. Zoe. How the classic has been underestimated and misunderstood! But she came in almost silently, muted brass with only a hint of the dazzle and blare.

"I believe that things will be looking a little better with my husband John now," she said. "He should be better composed by this time. I am his wife. I will just move in with him again and be the proper wife to him."

"Move in where?" Harry O'Donovan asked aghast, "into the grave?"

"Oh no, I'll move back into the house on Harrow Street and live there with my husband."

"Zoe, did you take the, well, thing from John?" Barney Sheen asked curiously.

"Yes, I took it, Barney, but only for this short while. I'll give it back to him now. He may be able to cope with it this time. I don't need such things for myself. This time I am certain that we will have a long and entertaining life together. All things coalesce for us now."

"Zoe, you're not making sense. John Penandrew is dead!" Cris Benedetti shouted.

"Who isn't?" she asked simply.

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"I'll bet you though, Cris—" (raucous horn blowing in the far distance) "that he's more alive than you are at this minute. Or you or you or you or you. If any of you were as alive as he is, I'd have you."

"You're out of your wits, Zoe," George Drakos said and blinked. There was something the matter with Drakos' eyes, with all of our eyes. Somewhere a brassy shimmer of the second brightest light that human eyes will ever see. The four men who knew everything did not know Zoe Archikos: much less did I.

ZOE moved back into the house on Harrow Street. And how was it with her there? Noisy, noisy. Some things at least coalesced for her or into her: among these, the florid witches who used to come with the dark. Their voices had been so jangling because they were broken voices, part voices. Now they were together in that dozen-toned instrument, the red-brass, the flesh-brass. They had never been anything other than wraiths of her. Now she was all one again.

There was some evidence also (shouting, grisly evidence) that the aeons or nephews or attributes had all coalesced into John Penandrew again.

Well, that is the sort of thing that a town must live with, or die with; but it will not live on a normal course.

LISTEN. No, not with your ears! Listen with your crawling flesh! Did you yourself ever meet a man after you had seen him dead? It does give you a dread, does it now? There was no need of elaboration. John Penandrew was a humorist but by that time he had become a little edgy of horror humor. There was none of that coming through the walls business. He came in normally by the door and sat down.

"Jesus Christ!" Barney Sheen moaned. "Are you a ghost, John?"

"The very opposite," Penandrew said softly. "In fact, I had to give up the ghost." Penandrew was *that* kind of humorist, but even bad jokes are shocking from a man who's supposed to be dead.

"It wasn't all of you in the coffin was it, John?" Barney asked in wonder.

"No. Only my older aspect went over the edge. I once thought that this would give me a foot in each world and I was curious about it. It didn't work that way. I have no consciousness of that aspect now; nor, I suppose, has he of me. I shuffled off the mortal coil there. I've won. That's something. Nobody else ever won at it, except those like Zoe who were already preternatural."

"You're a damned zombie, Penandrew!" Harry O'Donovan cried in shrill anger.

"Can a zombie be damned?" Penandrew asked. "I don't know.

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Tell me, Chris. You were the theology student. For damnation is there not required a nature of a certain moment? But I'm of another moment now. *Momentum*, I am saying, which means a movement and a power and a weight; and 'moment of time' is only part of its meaning and only part of mine."

"Damn your Latin! You're a deformity," O'Donovan cried.

"Yes, I'm a deformed curve, the one that never closes on itself," Penandrew said with his lopsided smile. "Barney Sheen's 'In the Beginning' bit left something out. There was what might have been a perfect sphere, yes. There was, possibly, an exterior speck for contrast. I say that there was something else, one curve that would not close when everything else closed into the rather neat package that called itself The Cosmos, the Beauty. There was one shape left over. I am part of that other shape. Try being a little lopsided sometimes, men. You'll live longer by it."

That was the last real talk that we ever had with John Penandrew. He never sought our company again and we sure never sought his.

NOBODY else lives in that long block on Harrow Street now, but the noises are over-riding in that whole part of town. There is nothing the law can do. It is always that beautifully brassy woman there when they call and always with her artless answers:

"It is only myself and my husband together here," Zoe says, "and we taking our simple pleasures together. Is that so wrong?" Even coppers get that funny look in their eyes when they have been hexed by the prevading sound of the brass winds.

Old boys and young men often gather near that house at night and howl like wolves from the glandular ghosts that the strange flesh calls up in them. But even the most aroused of them will not attempt the house or the doors.

The Penandrews are a unique couple taking their pleasures together all at once forever, and so violently as to drive the whole town stone-deaf—like those old stone-deaf statues, their only real kindred? For these two will not die in any natural course of things, not with that big loud bright brassy horn blowing in a distance, and at absolute close range, all at once, everywhere, unclosed, lop-sided. It's the ending that hasn't any end. The Stone is found, and it's an older texture than the philosophers believed. The transmutation is accomplished, into brass. Classic and *koine*: this is the Zoe who dies hardly forever; this is the Penandrew, the man of the wrong shape.

The four men who know everything understand it now.

And I do not. ★

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THE HOOKUP

DANNIE PLACHTA

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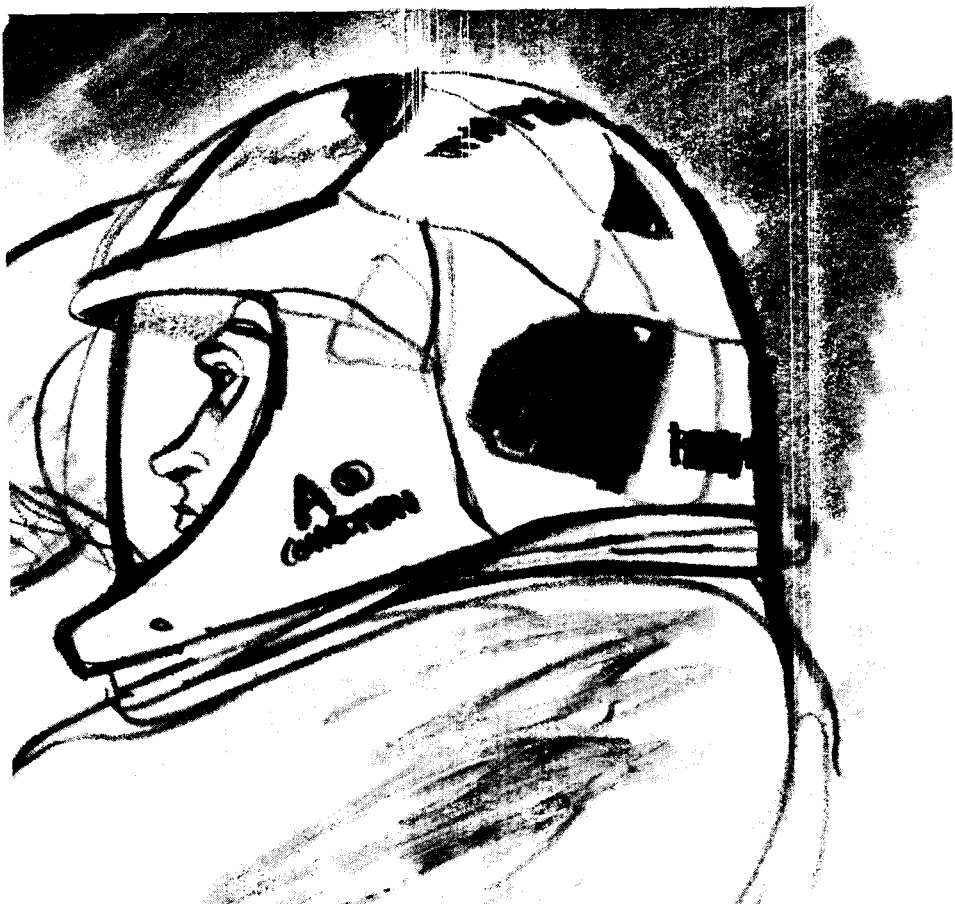

IT HAD little to do with the technical aspects of the hookup—both nations had long since mastered the necessary techniques. It was, rather, the political overtone of the operation that gripped the entire world with prayerful anticipation.

Long months at the conference tables of half a dozen world capitals had gone into the final preparations for this historic cooperative effort. Long years of meticulous planning had pushed irrevocably toward its ultimate success. Long centuries of

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quiet dreaming had gently pointed toward its fruition.

A thousand miles above the curving spread of the Pacific Ocean, where an imaginary line split fragments of time into days, the United States of America and the Soviet Union would soon join outstretched hands.

The two-man American space team, consisting of veteran astronauts Reynolds and Fletcher, was already on its way. They dropped a gigantic stage near the Florida coast and burned an arching trajectory toward the bulge of Africa.

Within a few dramatically thrifty minutes of the united space age, the Russian cosmonauts were concluding their countdown. The Soviet team, Zhutrovich and Zhutrovich, recently joined as husband and wife, poised for launch.

More anxious moments around a breathless sphere and two tumbling ships were in orbit. The Earth breathed out deep messages of congratulations, and bourbon and vodka permeated the atmospheric blanket.

The American spaceship *Washington, D.C. III* whirled in its great oval orbit, biding its time with the distant stars. Its crew was relaxing with the prospect of several panoramic sightseeing hours ahead, prior to the final intricate maneuvering needed to reach the rendezvous point.

The elated astronauts watched the steady lights of Earth skim beneath their cartwheeling ship, savoring the beauty and the splendid wonder of it all, when they heard a determined clanging beyond the inner door of the air lock.

"It's too soon," said Reynolds, somewhat alarmed.

"I'll radio back," said Fletcher —but he stood frozen.

"No," said the senior-ranked Reynolds, reaching for his airtight helmet. "They must be in trouble."

Quickly they secured their inverted fish-bowl helmets and moved with highly trained precision to unbolt the air-lock door.

The desperate clanging continued.

"They have a woman aboard," said Fletcher through the wire trails of the intercom. His voice was edged with soft metal.

"They're hours ahead of schedule," said Reynolds, glancing at the glowing console clock.

As they completed their task the violent clanging stopped. With final mated movements the Americans opened their end of the air lock. They bent their crystal-domed heads and peered cautiously through the yawning hatchway.

"It's empty," said Reynolds, with surprise barely buried within his crackling-metal voice.

"Not quite," breathed Fletcher.

He stepped back from the hatch.

A dog-sized form like a shining black beetle scurried into their ship. ★

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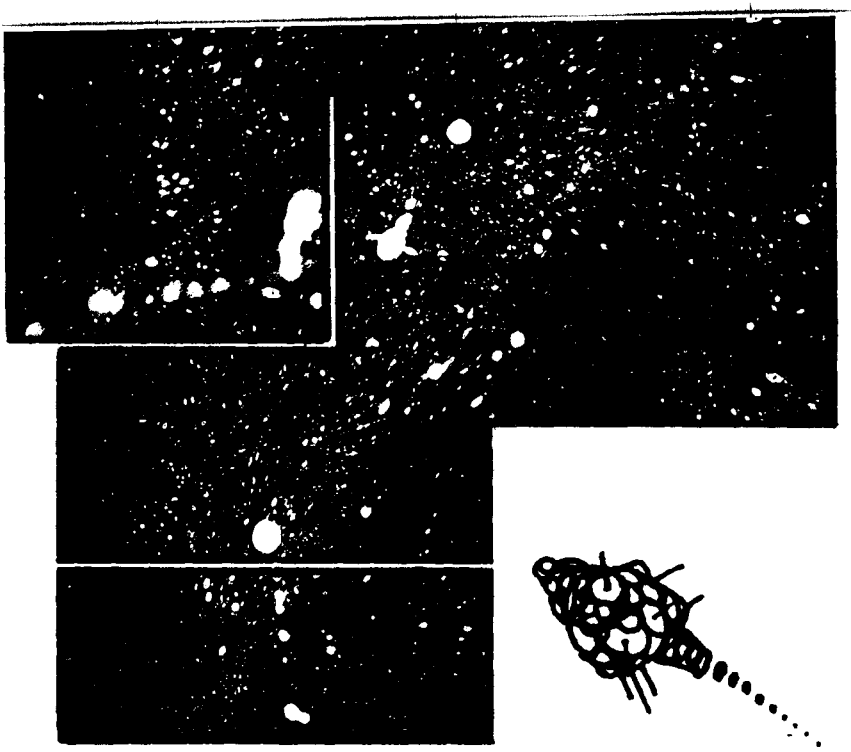

ANDREW J. OFFUTT

ASK A SILLY QUESTION

THE ship trembled. The reactor heated cesium and sent it, hot and deadly, through the neutron shield into the heat exchanger. From there it flowed through the gamma-ray shield to drive the monster turbine. Ignoring economy and efficiency, the turbine sent something like seventy-five percent of its energy back into the Shocklium radiation cooler which in turn fed back through the heat exchanger to the reactor at the very tip of the ship's nose. Coupled to the turbine, the generator sent the other twenty-five percent of its energy—in megawatts—sizzling down two channels to jet out into space from

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the electron waste tube and the ion exhaust jets.

Primitive, inefficient, uneconomical. But magnetism, gravity, resisted conquest with the tenacity of a blob of chewing gum on a theater seat.

The ship trembled. It plunged through space at a speed of 3 x 108 feet per second. Difficult? Try 2.1 x 108 mph. Still difficult? Make it over 56,800 miles per second, then couple that to a 2.1759-G acceleration and reach for your slipstick. A waste of time, that—one of the ship's four passengers is jealous of his responsibility and his computer tells him acceleration is steady at seventy feet per second toward a goal of 186,300 mps. Or thereabouts.

"I'll bet on energy," the comptech said. He patted his computer. It winked at him, humming. "That's what ole Cal means, I'm sure, and I go along with whatever Cal says. Energy."

"That is not what Cal says, Tom" the captain told him. He spun idly back and forth in his chair, facing the other three men. He was a captain of men, not machinery—the computer decided what to do and when to do it and told the ship and the ship obeyed. The captain was about as necessary to the ship's operation as the quintillions of watts of energy the engines wasted as a matter of course because Man could not wait for a better way. "Cal says he does not know. 'Insufficient data: Warning' does not mean Cal computes we'll be converted to energy." He grinned at the reporter. "You agree?"

"With you? Or that we'll be converted to energy?"

The captain nodded, grinning. "Yep."

The reporter shuddered. "How about some alternatives?"

"Oh man! There's an infinity of 'em," the captain said and chuckled at his joke. He swung in his chair, back and forth, back and forth, one hand flat on the steel panel running along the steel bulkhead behind him. "Doc?"

The government physicist looked up. He was calculating, using genine paper—lined—and a genuine pen, ballpoint. "Hm? What?"

"Tom's computer would be delighted to do whatever you're doing, Doc—and Tom would be double-delighted to feed it in."

"Oh, I'm sure of that," the physicist said. His manner was embarrassed. He waved the pen. "Habit. I use computers, too, of course."

"What do those artifacts of yours tell you?" Tom asked.

The physicist chuckled, looking down at the paper. "They tell me I can't work worth a damn at two-plus gees. Also—insufficient data. I'm just like Cal. I don't know."

"Cal," Tom said, his chin assuming a Mussolini tilt, "does know. All we lack is being smart

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enough to know how to ask the questions. Cal can answer them."

THE captain sighed. "Okay. Tom says we'll wind up as energy, Doc, because he thinks that's the 'Insufficient data' his machine complains about, and that's why it says 'Warning.' We have lots of time. Suppose we try to live with the data we have and play guessing games. What's your theory?"

Doc leaned back and frowned. His chin sagged badly under two gravities acceleration. "Einstein said that no energy can be transmitted at a velocity greater than the speed of light—c. If we hit c, we'll still be in the process of transmission even if we, uh become energy. Thus—"

"If we bust one rule," Tom said, "we can bust another. "I say we become energy at the instant we hit c." He twisted a little to pat the gleaming hide of his computer. "And Cal knows it. He thinks—"

"Cal," the physicist said, "does not think."

The comptech raised a finger to his lips and rolled his eyes. "Sh, Cal's sensitive!"

Three men laughed. The reporter was frowning. "Uh—look. Suppose you just pretend I'm a three-year-old in the first grade, okay?"

The captain looked eager. "Start from how far back?"

The computer technician and the physicist appeared just as delighted at the opportunity to show off. Which was what the reporter wanted, of course—he knew the theory backward and forward or he would not have been on board.

"Try starting," he said, looking sheepish, "with $E=mc^2$."

"Wow!" Tom rolled his eyes in the general direction of his hairline, which appeared to have retreated from previous threats. "You came along without knowing an ionized thing? Man, you're either dedicated or crazy! You realize we'll probably wind up looking like a supernova, with everyone on Earth trying to decide which of us to name it after."

"I know there's danger," the reporter said. "I've had that kind of assignment before. I also know this is the biggest story since the Cudahy Equations."

The captain was shaking his head, wearing his lady-killer smile again—worthless on this ship. He reached up to push his fingers through his blond burr-cut. "$E=mc^2$ means a given mass—that's m, and that's us—is transformed into E for energy at the speed of light, in centimeters squared. Too plain, Doc?"

The physicist moved his shoulders in a shrug. "It'll do."

"Everything's relative to everything else. And interdependent—space, time, matter. Space and time, interdependent, depend also on us, as observers. They aren't absolute, I mean. Einstein's law—which we've gone back to calling

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'theory'—says we can't exceed c. Because as we accelerate we gain mass. At almost-light, our mass doubles. At c, our mass becomes infinite."

"That's a meaningless phrase," the reporter prompted. "Totally meaningless, like ten billion dollars. It's inconceivable. Anyhow—so what would *happen*?"

"That's what our feller 'murricans are shelling out an inconceivable amount of money for us to find out," the captain told him. "One theory says the universe would collapse, whatever that means. Implode, sort of. Point is, since Cudahy we think Einstein postulated *his theory*, not the Universe's Law. Maybe. No big deal there: Newton was right for a long time but no one tried to apotheosize him. Einstein was nearly made a god. People in science have a bad habit of accepting what's in their books, without asking why and what if. I think that's why a lot of 'em are in science; it's a nice, safe haven, like a convent. Every now and then some boat-rocker with a bump of curiosity and a little imagination pops up and becomes Galileo or Newton or Maxwell or Planck or Einstein—or Cudahy."

"Or something else," the physicist said. "But I happen to agree with Doctor Cudahy—which doesn't stop me from admitting he might be crazy as a bedbug. And my presence here indicates I am. Ever hear of Stefan Christesco?"

He showed surprise when all three of the others shook their heads. He smiled. "I'll tell you why. Christesco published a book in nineteen-twenty-five in defense of Euclidean geometry. He tore into Einstein and Lorentz and Minkovski and wound up saying their postulates belonged to 'the domain of the imaginary and the absurd.' Cudahy's been attacked, too. So have I, for the matter of that. So, when the decision was made to send out a manned ship to find out, I volunteered and then fought to come. A lot of my detractors didn't express any desire to prove themselves right the hard way—wouldn't have looked through Galileo's telescope, either."

"Crazy as a bedbug," the comptech said. "But I haven't heard your theory, Doctor Bowers."

THE physicist leaned back and poked at his chin with his pen. "You may be right. But bear in mind that you are *interpreting* that computer's answer. It hasn't given an answer, for the matter of that; it's given a definite lack of one. And remember this—the word 'intuit' wasn't invented for computers. I think we can marry Einstein and Cudahy. Suppose it's true we can't exceed the speed of light. What does that mean? It means *relative to us*, to what we know. Or think we know. In this universe, this plane, this dimension—this

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coil, if you want to go Shakespearean. So—at the speed of light I wonder if we won't just, uh, slip sideways into another dimension. I doubt time. I expect something altogether else, a fifth one, if you need a word. Where the railroad tracks come together. Where time is—abbreviated. Where we *can* exceed c, in that plane."

"Sort of the universe next door?" the reporter asked. The physicist smiled and nodded. The reporter looked at the captain. "And you? What do you think, Captain?"

"I think we're going to be stuck with each other for a long, long time and you'd better call me Bob. Meanwhile, I don't theorize much. I'm just curious. What's 'infinity?' What does infinite mean? What's it like in no-Time no-Space?" He shrugged. "I volunteered and got picked. I asked just one question." He waited, and they waited. "Going to stare me down without asking, huh? Okay. I asked, 'Does light have mass and energy?' "

Doctor Bowers nodded, smiling. "That's an old one. Then how come it travels at lightspeed, eh?"

The reporter sighed. "The A-bomb proved Einstein, right? And you think you're going to become one?"

"A real whopper," Tom said.

"Assuming we get back—sorry, Tom," the reporter said, "am I going to be allowed to quote this theorizing-before-the-fact?"

"Ask me again," the physicist smiled, "*post facto.*"

"One thing about it," the captain sighed. "If you're right, Doc, Tom and that Cal of his will just have to decide how they want their crow cooked. But if Tom's right, you'll never have to listen to his I-told-you-so."

"But, the point is we can't do it," the reporter said, stepping back into the discussion. "As Doc said, Cudahy's equations are just that: figures on paper. They have yet to be field-tested."

"You've been stringing us along," the captain said. "You know all about it, don't you?"

"Well—suppose I challenge you back. I'll bet not one in a hundred or maybe more can give the meaning of $E=mc^2$. But Einstein said no material body or anything bearing energy could exceed the speed of light because—because it would require infinite energy?"

The comptech nodded. "With respect to the observer," he said. "And don't forget the business about achieving infinite mass. We're gaining now. I say it's impossible for our mass to reach infinity, whatever that is—but I'm no Chris Whoever-Doc-said. I say that at c we'll be converted into pure energy. Relatively speaking, I mean." He grinned. "Relative to us. And I believe in Cal. Cal doesn't goof. If I'm wrong, I eat crow, not Cal. He says we haven't told him enough for him to give us

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an answer—either that or he doesn't have the, the vocabulary to answer us. I keep trying, every time I think of another way to ask."

The reporter's mind was nearly as audible as the mechanical one behind Tom. "And that *is* the point," he said. "That there *isn't* any absolute motion. It's all relative. Right?"

"Relative," Doctor Bowers said, "to something." He stressed the final word and looked meaningfully at the reporter, then at Bob and Tom, his eyes large and round and ingenuous-looking as a kitten's. "But we can go on and on with our speculating. Try this. No *material* body. Suppose at the instant we hit c we become immaterial. And at the instant we drop *under* lightspeed we—materialize again. *Voila!*"

"That's strictly an evasion," Tom said. "But we're about to find out." He swung around to his pet. "Tell us when, Cal. Acceleration constant at seventy feet per second. Velocity . . ." He continued to speak quietly to the shiny metal cabinet with its ornamentation of dials and gauges and keys and its 'mouth,' a television screen. It chattered back.

The ship surged on, trembling.

THE reporter watched the stars. Their positions were changing, he knew—relative to him, since he felt no movement—in the same manner as the minute hand on his watch. He knew it moved. He could see that it had moved, by looking away and counting and then looking back. But its actual motion was not quite visible. The stars moved the same way; they were there, immobile in appearance, but they weren't where they'd been a few hours ago. Relative to their more distant companions. And to the observer.

Tom gave the computer a velocity figure of 56,820 mps. That figure changed as the electronic brain figured its answer. He had keyed a tape answer in addition to the visual one—he read the tape, nodded, said "Mark," and depressed a key. A black pointer swung across a dial, stopped at 112. The dial next to it indicated 24. The third registered 54. The last gauge mentioned a figure too small to bother with.

"Round to minutes," Tom told his machine and Cal dutifully zeroed the final dial and raised the one to its left to 55. Tom swung around in his padded chair. Doctor Bowers was looking at him, smiling, his head cocked.

"One-hundred thirteen days, fifty-five minutes to lightspeed," the computer technician said and the physicist nodded, looking down at the paper on his knees. His hand was damp; both pen and hand were heavy at just over two gravities constant acceleration.

"Right," he said and the reporter made a grinning note.

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"Doc's kidding you, Tom," the captain said. "Ask your friend if we can take the mass increase at steady acceleration." Doctor Bowers jerked his head to stare quizzically at the captain as the comptech turned and posed the question to Cal.

A broad glastic screen just above Tom's head glowed as its five-ounce electron tube beamed Cal's answer on it: "$E=mc^2$."

The captain chuckled. "Can't fool old Cal," he said. "From that answer I'd swear he has a sense of humor. He's reminding me that sure our mass will increase, just as your pen will shorten, Doc. But since it's all relative we won't be aware of a thing. No sweat."

"Plenty of sweat," the reporter said. "We've got to sit around and wait four months and a day. That's a long sweat."

"I'm not worrying about the four months and a day," Tom said. "But you can bet I'll sweat those last fifty-five minutes!"

THE stars crawled by. Dials moved. There were no days, no nights, no noons. Long ago Tom had set the computer to ring an alarm to remind them of lunch-time and dinner hour. Later he'd cut it off—it invariably interrupted a discussion or an argument or a game of chess or double-board Broadside. They ate when it was opportune, slept when they began to slur words and squint. On the one hundred and fifth day they were moving at one hundred seventy-six thousand miles per second. On the one-hundred eleventh day they watched the final three figures on the velocity gauge creep higher and higher. The first three read one-eight-five.

They waited. Eyes strayed more and more frequently to the gauges.

"Bingo," the reporter said and Doctor Bowers jumped two inches.

Heads snapped to the dials. Their velocity indicator ticked up to 186,000 miles per second.

They made their bets, each taking a different figure, no one choosing the accepted lightspeed of 186,282. "Be damned if I'm not sweating," the captain growled and the nervous laughter of his companions was their admission of the same fact.

"We've got a few more hours, Bob," the comptech said. "You're one game up on me. Want to give me a chance to even the score?"

The captain grinned. "No fair. I'm in no condition to play chess."

"Relative to someone on Earth," you mean, Tom said, laughing. "Relative to me we're even."

Again they laughed. Nervously.

And waited. And watched the hour-clock die as had the day-clock. Their eyes ached as they watched the last pointer creep backward from fifty-five while the velocimeter crept forward.

Tom began counting at ten.

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"Four- three- two- one- bingo!" His announcement was gratuitous —he turned from the computer to find the others watching the viewplace and the gauges beneath it.

Nothing happened. Their speed moved past 186,282 miles per second. Nothing happened.

And then the stars vanished from the viewplate and all gauges swung back to zero.

"My God!"

"According to the old story," the captain said drily—and quietly —"a voice is supposed to answer 'Yes?' " He went on—no one had smiled. "Very well, Exec." His voice was stiff now. Military discipline had been used to dam panic before. "We have exceeded the speed of light and we have not been converted to energy and my mass feels pretty finite. The railroad tracks have not converged. You better confess to being wrong, kick Cal in the slats and then tell us the score."

"Aye sir." Tom turned his chair to face Cal. He felt fantastically, sickeningly light. The pressure of acceleration was gone. He glanced back over his shoulder at the dead gauges and the blank viewplate. Then he asked his question.

"Cal—have we exceeded the speed of light?"

YES

The television screen spelled out the word. Cal volunteered no information. It was because of the computer's laconic responses that Tom had named it after a former president famed for his terseness.

"What has happened to us, Cal?"

NOTHING.

"Like hell. Qualify!"

ABSOLUTELY NOTHING HAS HAPPENED TO YOU OR TO THIS SHIP.

"All right then, dammit, what has happened, period?"

REPEAT: NOTHING HAS HAPPENED TO YOU OR SHIP OR CAL. SHIP HAS SUCCESSFULLY EXCEEDED LIGHTSPEED. REST OF UNIVERSE HAS VANISHED.

"Good god!" the reporter gasped.

"My sentiments exactly," the captain said. "Cal has been right all along: 'Insufficient data. Warning.' He couldn't tell us about this until we asked him and we didn't know how to ask the question. Well. Try asking Cal where the universe is, Tom."

Tom did.

INSUFFICIENT DATA. UNKNOWN.

"Where are we, Cal? Tom asked and his machine chittered back at him like a happy squirrel.

The answer flashed on the screen. The men stared at it, then at each other. Doctor Bowers had to smile. His smile became a chuckle, flowed into laughter. In a moment all four of them were laughing, the sound moving steadily toward hysteria. The computer's reply remained on the screen while Cal waited in vain for an answer.

RELATIVE TO WHAT? ★

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Today's young have a word for everything. Do you?

SITTICK

ANNE MCCAFFREY

"WHEN is now?"

"What did you say, honey?"

"*When* is now?"

"Do you mean 'now' the second we're talking? Or the day, May 25, 1969?"

"No, mommie, I mean, when is 'now'? Last minute's now is then. And tomorrow's now is ahead. Is there ever a Now now?"

"Really, Eric, that's splitting hairs too fine. Can't you see I'm busy getting supper. Go out and play with all the nice new neighborhood children we have here."

"I don't want to."

"Why on earth not? We spent a lot of money to buy a house near many boys your own age and now you won't play."

"Is that a now 'now'?"

"Eric!"

"Oh, mom, they won't let me play with them."

"Eric, that's foolish. You just go outside and play."

"If I do they'll call me sittik until I cry. That isn't a nice now."

"Sittik? What does that mean?"

"I dunno."

"Well, then, I certainly wouldn't let a little word I didn't know the meaning of bother me."

"It's because I don't know that scares me, mommy."

"Well, I'm sure it can't be any-

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thing more than a syllabic jumble and no boy of seven should be afraid of a collection of sounds."

"It's the way they say it, mommy. It's got an awful sound."

"For mercy's sake, Eric. Oh, well. Stay in. Do your homework. You do have homework, don't you?"

[] [] []

"Eric! Go out and get in line for the school bus!"

"The bus isn't in sight."

"It's ten after eight. It'll be here any moment."

"I'll run out as soon as I see it at the top of the hill."

"Out. Out this minute. Get into line."

"I can't go out, mother. They'll call me sittik."

"I'm tired of your using that as an excuse for everything. Really, Eric, I'm going to speak to your father about such foolishness."

"I wish you would. Maybe *he* can make them stop calling me sittik."

[] [] []

"Sticks and stones may break your bones, son, but names can't hurt you."

"Gee, Dad, you don't understand any more than mother. It's not just the word. It's the way they say it. They don't want me here and that word is . . . that's a bad word. It's the worst word in the whole world."

"Tell you what, Eric, we'll get some of the boys together and go off for an afternoon. How do you like that idea?"

"You just don't understand, Dad."

[] [] []

"Eric! Eric, unlock that door this minute. You've missed the school bus and I'll have to take you."

"I won't go, mother. They're all calling me sittik now. Even the girls."

"This is perfectly ridiculous, Eric Matson. Open that door."

"I won't go. I won't go. You can't make me."

"There's nothing organically wrong with the boy, Mrs. Matson. It's an emotional problem. Probably an adjustment to the move. Was he attached to a friend where you lived before?"

"Why, no more than most boys his age."

"I can recommend a guidance counselor."

"Eric's not retarded, is he?"

"I didn't imply that, Mrs. Matson, but he is emotionally disturbed about something."

"Oh, that silly word."

"Yes?"

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"It's too ridiculous. The boys in the neighborhood were calling him 'sittik', but a word can't—well, it's too silly."

"What word?"

"I told you, 'sittik.' "

"Sittik! What does it mean?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. And it's ridiculous to think a word that has no meaning could reduce a child to Eric's state. That's why I thought he might be run down or suffering—"

"Here's the name of the counselor, Mrs. Matson. Often a trifle, even a silly word, unlocks a long forgotten fear that a skilled therapist can disperse."

"Well, if you're sure there's nothing physically wrong with him—"

▯ ▯ ▯

"Take my son to a headshrinker? For a stupid word? Ridiculous."

"But Dr. Anstriker was quite serious about it."

"Probably gets a commission. We've raised a sensible boy sensibly. No, we'll work this thing out ourselves."

▯ ▯ ▯

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Matson. The boy has lost the will to live. I wished you'd called me sooner. A therapist might have helped."

▯ ▯ ▯

"Arthur?"

"Helen? Is that you? Speak up. I can't understand you when you're whispering. And make it snappy. I'm due in a meeting right now."

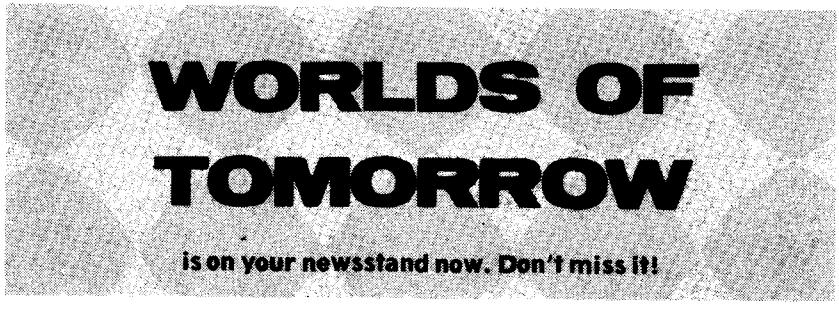
"Arthur, you must come home."

"For heaven sake's, Helen, stop whispering. I can't come home. And you should get out more. You can't bring Eric back by moaning around the house."

"I don't dare go out of the house, Arthur. That's why you have to come home."

"What?"

"They're calling *me* sittik." ★



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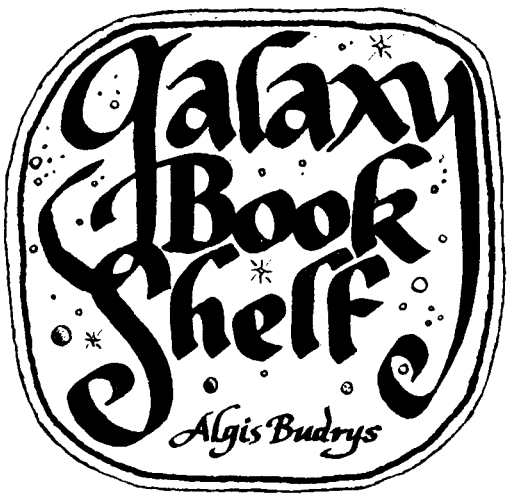

ANNE MCCAFFREY'S *The Ship Who Sang* is a pretty good adventure book. It's published by Walker & Co. for $4.95, and its the story of Helva, the human personality embedded in an interstellar spaceship.

Now, I don't normally review other reviewers, but Paul Tabori, author of *The Green Rain* and other science fiction non-landmarks, said something so incredible about this book for one of the Chicago papers that I'm going to break a rule this one time. Displaying that insert of erudition which elevates a true critic above the mere hack, Professor Tabori told us all about the potted human beings once in vogue at certain royal courts and other centers of illumination around the middle of the second millennium.

Infant people were placed in large earthenware jars for life and carried around from place to place to be a kind of portable T.V. They were educated, frequently entertaining and witty—deponent knoweth not what alternative they had, except a quicker death—and somehow all this reminded Professor Tabori of Helva. I brought him into this review because I want to borrow his admittedly fascinating historical reference and discuss Helva as the antithesis of a captive brain. Helva is, in fact, Wonder Woman. She can do anything except get felt, and she doesn't have to be very smart. Nor is she.

She has talent—she sings. She has emotions—expressed in terms of purest soap opera, because she cannot gesture or show any other form of expression, and therefore

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has to pour it all into the one channel of her unsubtle verbal apparatus, (as distinguished from a superb set of vocal cords).

Unlike a human being set in a jar, able to command his environment only through the exercise of wit and wile and able to achieve mobility only through persuasion, Helva has got the fully developed ability to go anywhere and do anything. In fact, the only control her masters actually have over her is a pretty well developed sense of inhibition that she has acquired in the course of her education. And they do sweat and worry about what would happen if Helva, the super spaceship, ever decided to take off on her own.

Well, she does and she doesn't. She has numerous mind-affairs with the "brawns" who are her pilots. But of course she's fully insulated from any physical contact and, as we've seen, in my opinion she's not particularly capable of doing much with an opportunity for genuine emotion.

She goes along shouting and singing and heaving great metallic sighs. She becomes famous throughout the galaxy of course, because unlike all the other ships like her, she does this peculiar thing—she sings. She's a kind of a freak, you see.

CATHERINE Moore is probably the best lady poet we've ever had

BERKLEY SF

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in this field. She writes, as the saying goes, like an angel, and what she writes is always a treat. What she lacks as a plotter of commercial fiction can normally be seen only when one looks over the impressive array of really great commercial stories turned out by her and the late Henry Kuttner, when they were married and creating numbers of independent literary reputations for their various collaborative pen names.

The Kuttner-Moore stories were really fantastically good. In part this was because their people had three dimensions and an engagement with life. Even roaring down the road to hell they did it with a gusto and a sense of their own worth. Yet at the same time the stories in which they displayed these traits were tightly plotted, well-paced presentations.

In ordinary analytical parlance that latter trait is assumed to have been Kuttner's contribution. Still, C.L. Moore working under her solo byline is also the author of stories like *No Woman Born* and the novel *Judgement Night*. No one with these masterpieces in her repertoire can be said to be anything less than superb as a commercial writer in all respects.

But if you would like to see what can be done with superb storytelling ability and an as yet not fully developed sense of plot, then *Jirel of Joiry* is your girl. This book (Paperback Library #63-166, 60¢) compiles five pre-Kuttner stories by C.L. Moore from the 1930s *Weird Tales*. The latest date is 1939, the earliest is 1934.

Each of these sword-and-sorcery stories devotes about 10,000 words to advancing a plot which would suffice for one well developed paragraph under most circumstances as they are understood today and as they were even better understood a score of years ago. But *Jirel of Joiry* lives on despite the forty-five intervening years since her creation. It may not make a hell of a lot of sense for a slim redhead to have been a feudal tiger but C.L. Moore makes it make sense. She does it by substituting observation for action. Instead of advancing the plot, the events which occur to Jirel, as she struggles with the half-understood forces of darkness in her quasi-medieval world, are all things that play on the heart of what being you and me is all about. When she inflicts horror on her lover she knows what she has done. She goes out and atones for it, and they don't live happily ever after. But at least their souls are at peace, which is a pretty good concept when you come right down to it, and the reason why this is still a good book, and why the young Catherine Moore is still one heck of a worker even though there have been later and even more skillful editions. ★

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(Continued from page 25)

"I'm sure it is. But you must be more careful going to and from work. I don't mean just stay out of Abandoned Zones. Dressed the way you dress and looking as you do, you are in danger anywhere. Don't you *realize* it? Doesn't your husband know it?"

"Oh. I'm careful, sir; I know what can happen, I see the news. But I'm not afraid. I'm carrying three unregistered illegal weapons —and know how to use them. Boss got them for me and had his guards train me."

"Hmm. As an officer of the court I should report you. As a human being who knows what a deadly jungle this city is I applaud your good sense. If you really do know how to use them. If you have the courage to use them promptly and effectively. If, having defended yourself, you're smart enough to get away fast and say nothing to cops. That's a lot of ifs, dear."

"Truly, I'm not afraid. Uh, if you were my attorney, anything I told you would be privileged, would it not?"

"Yes. Are you asking me to be your attorney?"

"Uh . . . yes, sir."

"Very well, I am. Privileged. Go ahead."

"Well, one night I had to go out on a blood-donor call. By myself, Joe wasn't home. Didn't worry me. I've made donations at night many times and often alone. I keep my Gadabout in our flat and stay in it until I'm inside the hospital or whatever. But—do you know that old, old hospital on the west side, Our Lady of Mercy?"

"I'm afraid not."

"No matter. It's old, built before the government gave up trying to guarantee safety in the streets. No vehicle lift, no indoor parking. Just a lot with a fence and a guard at the gate. Happened when I came out. This frog tried to hop me between the parked cars. Don't know whether he was after my purse. Or me. Didn't wait to find out—don't even know if it was a man, could have been a woman—"

"Unlikely."

"As may be. Stun bomb in his face with my left hand as I zapped with my right and didn't wait to see if he was dead. Buzzed out of there and straight home. Never told the police, never told Joe, never told *anybody* until just now." (But it took a triple dose of Narcotol to stop your shakes, didn't it, dearie—oh, shut up, that's not the point.)

"So you're a brave girl and can shoot if you have to. But you are a silly girl, too, and very lucky. Hmm. Johann has an armored car much like this and two shifts of guards to go with it."

"Of course he has guards, sir. I know nothing about his cars."

"He has a Rolls-Skoda. Eunice, we are no longer going to depend on how fast you are with weapons. You can sell your Gadabout or plant flowers in it; from here on you'll have mobile guards and an armored car. Always."

MRS. Branca looked startled. "But, Mr. Salomon! Even with my new salary I couldn't begin to—"

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"Switch off, dear. You know that Johann will never again ride in a car. Chances are he will never leave that room. But he still owns his personal defense car; he still keeps a double crew, two drivers, two shotguns—and maybe they run an errand once a week. Eating their heads off and playing pinochle the rest of the time. Tomorrow morning my car will pick you up; tomorrow afternoon your own car—Johann's—will take you home. And will be on call for you at all other times, too."

"I'm not sure Boss is going to like this."

"Forget it. I'm going to chew him out for letting you take risks. If he gives me any back talk, he'll find I have enough chips to hire you away from him. Be sensible, Eunice; this doesn't cost him a dollar; it's a business expense that he is already incurring. Change of subject. What do you think of his plans for this *soi-disant* warm body?"

"Is a brain transplant possible? Or is he grabbing at a straw? I know he's not happy tied down to all that horrid machinery—goodness, I've been combing the shops for the naughtiest styles I can find but it gets harder and harder to get a smile out of him. Is it practical, this scheme?"

"That's beside the point, dear. He's ordered it and we are going to deliver. This Rare Blood Club—does it have all the AB-Negatives?"

"Heavens, no. The last club report showed less than four thousand AB-Negs enrolled out of a probability of about a million."

"Too bad. What do you think of his notion of page ads and prime time on video?"

"It would cost a dreadful lot of money. But I suppose he can afford it."

"Certainly. But it stinks."

"Sir?"

"Eunice, if this transplant is to take place, there must be *no* publicity. Do you remember the fuss when they started freezing people? No, you're too young. It touched a bare nerve which set off loud howls and the practice was very nearly prohibited—on the theory that, since most people can't afford it, no one should be allowed to have it. The Peepul, bless 'em—our country has at times been a democracy, an oligarchy, a dictatorship, a republic, a socialism, and mixtures of all of those, without changing its basic constitution, and now we are a de facto anarchy under an elected dictator even though we still have laws and legislatures and Congress. But through all of this that bare nerve has always been exposed: the idea that if everyone can't have something, then no one should have it. So what will happen when one of the richest men in the country advertises that he wants to buy another man's living body—just to save his own stinking, selfish life?"

"I don't think Boss is all that bad. If you make allowances for his illness, he's rather sweet."

"Beside the point. That bare nerve will jump like an ulcerated tooth. Preachers will denounce him and bills will be submitted in legislatures and the A.M.A. will order its members to have nothing

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to do with it and Congress might even pass a law against it. Oh, the Supreme Court would find such a law unconstitutional I think—but by then Johann would be long dead. So no publicity. Does the Rare Blood Club know who these other AB-Negatives are who are not members?"

"I don't know. I don't think so."

"We'll check. I would hazard that at least eighty percent of the people in this country have had their blood typed at some time. Does blood type ever change?"

"Oh, no, never. That's why we rares—that's what we call ourselves—are so in demand."

"Good. Almost all of the population who have been typed have the fact listed in computers somewhere, and with computers so interlinked today it is a matter of what questions to ask and how and where—and I don't know how but I know the firm to hire for it. We progress, my dear. I'll get that started and off-load the details onto you, and then get other phases started and leave you to check on them while I go to South America and see this butcher Boyle. And—"

"Mr. Salomon! Bad turf coming up."

Salomon thumbed his intercom. "Roger." He added: "Damn them. Those two beauties *like* to go through Abandoned Areas. They hope somebody will shoot so that they will have legal excuse to shoot back. I'm sorry, my dear. With you aboard I should have given orders to stay out of A.A.s no matter what."

"It's my fault," Mrs. Branca said meekly. "I should have told you that it is almost impossible to circle near Nineteen-B without crossing a bad zone. I have to detour way around to reach Boss's house. But we're safe inside, are we not?"

"Oh, yes. If we're hit, this old tank has to be prettied up, that's all. But I should not have to tell them. Rockford isn't so bad; he's just a Syndicate punk, an enforcer who took a fall. But Charlie—the one riding Shotgun—is mean. An XYY. Committed his first murder at eleven. He—" Steel shutters slid up around them and covered the bulletproof glass. "We must be entering the A.A."

Inside lights came on as shutters darkened windows. Mrs. Branca said, "You make it sound as if we were in more danger from your mobiles than from the bad zone."

He shook his head. "Not at all, my dear. Oh, I concede that any rational society would have liquidated them—but since we don't have capital punishment I make use of their flaws. Both are on probation paroled to me and they *like* their jobs. Plus some other safe—" The *rap-rap-rap* of an automatic weapon stitched the length of the car.

In that closed space the din was ear-splitting. Mrs. Branca gasped and clutched at her host. A single explosion, still louder, went *poungk*! She buried her face in his shoulder, clung harder. "*Got 'im!*" a voice yelped. The lights went out.

"They got us?" she asked, her voice muffled by the ruffles of his shirt.

"No, no." He patted her and

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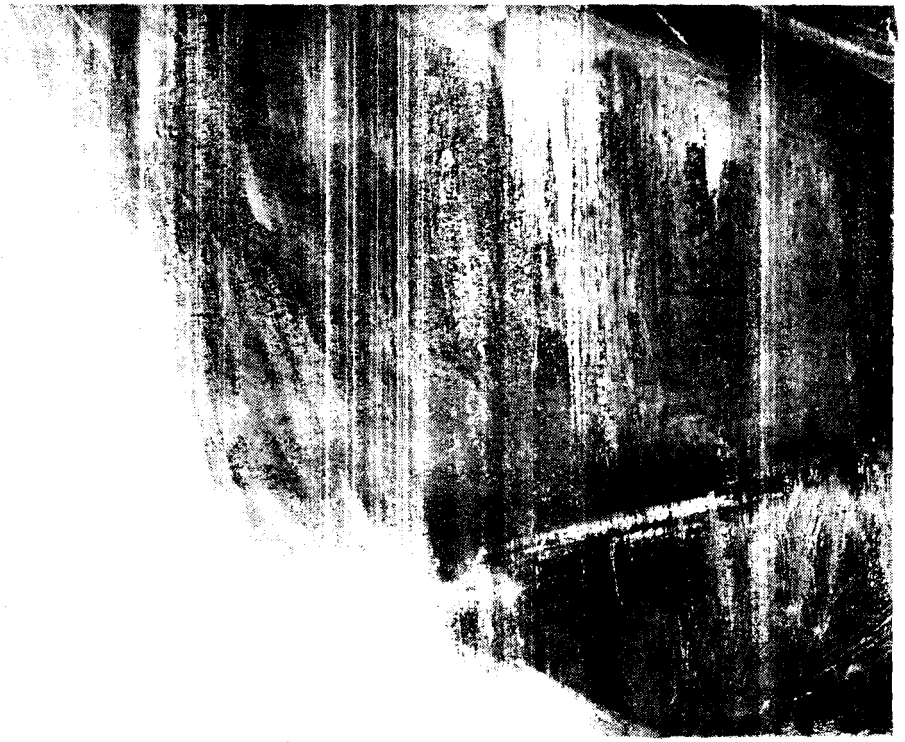

put his right arm firmly around her. "Charlie got *them*. Or thinks he did. That last was our turret gun. You're safe, dear."

"But the lights went out."

"Sometimes happens. The concussion. I'll find the switch for the emergency lights." He started to take his arms from around her.

"No, no! Just hold me, please—I don't mind the dark. Feel safer in it—if you hold me."

"As you wish, my dear." He settled himself more comfortably, and closer.

PRESENTLY he said softly, "My goodness, what a snuggly baby you are."

"You're pretty snuggly yourself . . . Mr. Salomon."

"Can't you say Jake? Try it."

"Jake. Yes, Jake. Your arms are so strong. How old are you, Jake?"

"Seventy-one."

"I can't believe it. You seem ever so much younger."

"Old enough to be your grandfather, little snuggle puppy. I simply look younger . . . in the dark. But one year into borrowed time according to the Bible."

"I won't let you talk that way; you're *young*! Let's not talk at all, Jake. Dear Jake."

"Sweet Eunice."

Some minutes later the driver's

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voice announced, "All clear, sir," as the shutters started sliding down —and Mrs. Branca hastily disentangled herself from her host.

She giggled nervously. "My goodness!"

"Don't fret, dear. It's one-way glass."

"That's a comfort. Just the same, that light is like a dash of cold water."

"Um, yes. Breaks the mood. Just when I was feeling young."

"But you *are* young—Mr. Salomon."

"Jake."

"Jake. Years don't count, Jake. Goodness me, I got skin paint all over your shirt ruffles."

"Fair enough, I mussed your hair."

"My hair I can comb. But what will your wife say when she sees that shirt?"

"She'll ask why I didn't take it off. Eunice, dear, I have no wife. Years ago she turned me in on a newer model."

"A woman of poor taste. You're a classic, Jake—and classics improve with age. Does my hair look better now?"

"Lovely. Perfect."

"I'm almost tempted to ask to have us driven back into that bad zone so you can muss it again."

"I'm more than 'almost tempted.' But I had better take

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you home—unless you want to go with me over into Canada? Back by midnight, probably."

"I want to and I can't, really I can't. So take me home. But let me sit close and put your arm around me but don't muss my hair this time."

"I shall be careful." He gave his driver the coordinates of Mrs. Branca's flat, then added: "And get there without going through any more Abandoned Areas, you trigger-happy bandits!"

"Very good, Mr. Salomon."

They rode in silence, then Mrs. Branca said, "Jake . . . you were feeling quite young, just before we were interrupted."

"I'm sure you know it."

"Yes. I was ready to let you, and you know that, too. Jake? Would you like a skin pic of me? A good one, not one taken by that snoopy character who charges so much."

"Will your husband take one? Can you sneak me a copy?"

"No huhu, Jake, dear. I have dozens of skin pix—I was once a beauty contestant, remember? You are welcome to one . . . if you'll keep your mouth shut about it."

"Privileged communication. Your secrets are always safe with your attorney."

"What do you like? Artistic? Or sexy?"

"Uh . . . what a choice to have to make!"

"Mmm, a pic can be both. I'm thinking of one of me in a shower, hair soaked, wet all over, not a speck of body paint, not even face makeup, not even—well, you'll see. Is that on your wave length?"

"I'll howl like a wolf!"

"You shall have it. Quick change of subject; we're almost there. Jake? Does Boss stand any chance with this brain transplant thing?"

"I'm not a medical man. In my lay opinion—none."

"So I thought. Then he doesn't have long to live whether he has the operation or not. Jake, I'm going to make still greater effort to dress even naughtier for him, as long as he lasts."

"EUNICE, you are a sweet girl. There is nothing nicer you could do for him. Much better than saying thanks for this trust fund."

"I wasn't thinking about that ridiculous million dollars, Jake, I was thinking about *Boss*. Feeling sorry for him. I'll go shopping tonight for something *really* exotic—or if I can't find a novel exotic, then a simple skintight see-through . . . passé but always effective with the right paint job underneath—Joe is good at that. And—well, if I'm going to have guards now, some days I may wear nothing but paint—stilt heels to make my legs look even better—yes, I know they're pretty—heels, a nylon minimum-gee and paint."

"And perfume."

"Boss can't smell, Jake. All gone."

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"I still have my sense of smell."

"Oh. All right, I'll wear perfume for you. And paint for Boss. I've never tried anything that extreme at work . . . but now that we no longer work at his offices—no longer see many people—and I can keep a semi-see-through smock around, just in case—I might as well see if Boss likes it. Joe will enjoy thinking up provocative designs, likes to paint me and is not jealous of Boss, feels sorry for the poor old man just as I do. And it is *so* hard to find novelty in exotic clothes. Even though I shop at least one night a week."

"Eunice."

"Yes, sir. Yes, Jake."

"Don't shop tonight. That's an order—from your boss by virtue of the power-of-attorney I hold."

"Yes, Jake. May one ask why?"

"You can wear a paint-only job tomorrow if you wish—this car and my guards will deliver you like crown jewels. But I need the car tonight. Starting tomorrow you'll have Johann's car and guards and you will *always* use them for shopping. And everything."

"Yes, sir," she said meekly.

"But you are mistaken about Johann's not having long to live. His problem is that he has too long to live."

"I don't understand."

"He's trapped, dear, all joking aside. He's fallen into the clutches of the medical profession and they won't *let* him die. Once he allowed them to harness him into that life-support gear he lost his last chance. Have you noticed that his meals are served without a knife? Nor even a fork? Just a plastic spoon."

"But his hands tremble so. I sometimes feed him. He hates to have nurses 'messing around' as he calls it."

"Think about it, dear. They have made it impossible for him to do anything but stay alive. A machine. A weary machine that hurts all the time. Eunice, this brain transplant is just a way for Johann to outsmart his doctors. A fancy way to commit suicide."

"No!"

"Yes. They've taken the simple ways away from him, so he's had to think up a fancy one. You and I are going to help him do it, exactly the way he wants it done. We seem to have arrived. Don't cry, damn it. Your husband will want to know why and you must *not* tell him. Do you feel like kissing me goodbye?"

"Oh, please do!"

"Stop the tears and turn up your pretty face; they'll be unlocking us in a moment or two."

Presently she whispered, "That was as good a kiss as the very first one, Jake . . . and I no longer feel like crying. But I heard them unlock us."

"They'll wait until I unlock from inside. May I go up the lift with you and see you to your door?"

"Nnn . . . I can explain your guards but would have trouble explaining why the firm's chief counsel bothers to do so. Joe isn't jealous of Boss—but might be of you. I don't want him to be . . . especially when I came so close to giving him reason to be."

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"We could correct that near miss."

"Could be, dear Jake. My Iowa-farm-girl morals don't seem very strong today—I think I've been corrupted by a million dollars and a Rolls-Royce . . . and a city slicker. Let me go, dear."

III

THE guards escorted her up and to her door in respectful silence. Mrs. Branca looked with new interest at Charlie, the Shotgun—wondered how a mousy, fatherly little man could be as vicious as Jake seemed to know that he was.

They "stood sideboy" as she spoke to her door's lock, then waited until her husband unbolted it. As the door opened Rockford saluted and said, "Oh-nine-forty, miss—we'll be waiting right here."

"Thank you, Rockford. Good night. Good night, Charlie."

Joe Branca waited until he had thrown the bolts and reset the alarm before he spoke. "What t'hell happen? An' where you trap uniform apes?"

"Don't I get a kiss first? Surely I'm not all that late? It's not yet eighteen."

"Talk, woman. Other ape shows back two hours with your jitterbuggy—tha's okay; your boss's butler phoned." He took off her cloak and kissed her. "So where you been, dizzy baggage? Missed you."

"That's the nicest thing I've heard all day. That you've missed me."

"Walking the ceiling! What happen?"

"Were you worried? Oh, dear!"

"Not worried, Smith's door flunky said you been sent on errand and 'ud come home in a Brink's. So knew you safe. Just torched it took so long when call made spec you'd short it. Rozzer?"

"Roz. Simple, though. Boss sent me with his Best Boy—Jake Salomon, you know."

"Fixer. Roz."

"Mr. Salomon took me in his car to his office to work on things Boss wanted at once—you know how right-now Boss is and worse since he's been wired down."

"Poor old muck should take the Big One. Pitiful."

"Don't say that, dear. I cry when I think about it."

"You're a slob, Sis. But me, too."

"That's why I love you, dear. Anyhow a longish job and Mr. Salomon had his guards take me home—and they drove through Bird's Nest turf and we got fired on. Chopped all down one side."

"Huh? Doom?"

"Not even grief. Fun."

"Like what inside?"

"Terribly noisy. But exciting. Made me horny."

"Everything makes you horny, tits." He grinned and mussed her hair. "You're home and no aches, what counts. So peel. Inspiration eating me, whole day. Walking the ceiling!"

"Which sort of inspiration, dearest?" she asked while sliding the half-sweater off her right shoulder and peeling it down her

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arm. "And have you eaten? If you start painting, you won't stop to eat."

"Ate some. Too high on inspiration. Big, big! I'll flash a pack for you. Chicken? Spaghetti? Pizza?"

"Anything. I'd better eat if it's that sort of inspiration." She kicked off her sandles, pushed down the panty-ruffle, sat on the floor to slide off the single tight attached to it. "Am I going to pose for a painting or are you going to paint on me and mug it?"

"Both. Tha's the grabber. A Nova."

She laid her dress carefully aside, rocked forward into lotus seat. "I don't roz it. 'Both?' "

"Both. You'll see." He looked down, ran his eyes over her, smiled. "And both sorts inspiration.

"Well! Happy-making!"

"Not too hungry? Can wait."

"Beloved man, when was I ever that hungry? Never mind the bed; just grab a pillow and come here!"

Shortly Mrs. Branca was thinking happily how lucky it was that she had not let dear Jake go ahead —the sweet thing would have been a disappointment compared with what she had at home . . . yet he had got her wonderfully primed for *this*. Really, it was best to be a faithful wife. Usually. What a wonderful, extraordinary day! Should she tell Joe about her big pay raise? No hurry. Couldn't tell him *anything* else. Too bad. Then she quit thinking coherently.

Some time later she opened her eyes and smiled up at him. "Thank you, beloved."

"Good vibes?"

"Just what Eunice needed. At times like this I'm convinced that you're Michelangelo."

He shook his head. "Not old Mike. Boys his jolly. Picasso maybe."

She hugged him. "Anyone you want to be, darling, as long as you go on being mine. All right. I'll pose now, and eat at the breaks."

"Forgot. Letter from Mama. Read?"

"Certainly, darling. Let me up and find it."

HE FETCHED it, still unopened. She sat up and glanced through it to see how much editing it would require. Un-hah, just as you expected, dearie, the periodic threat to come pay us "a nice long visit." Well, she knew how to deal with *that*. Out! Because Joe did not know how to refuse his mother anything. That one visit had been one too many—yet that had been when they had had two rooms, before she had found this wonderful one-big-everything studio room for Joe. Let that clinging old bag move in? No more jolly romps on the floor? No, Mama Branca. I will *not* let you ruin our happy nest with your smothering presence. You stay where you are and live on Welfare . . . and I'll send you a check from time to time and let you think it's a present from Joe. But that's *all*!

"Anything?"

"The usual, dearest. Her stomach still bothers her but the priest sent her to another doctor and she's doing better, she says. But let me start at the beginning. 'My

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darling Baby Boy, Not much news since last time Mama wrote but if I don't write I don't never get a letter back. Tell Eunice to write a longer letter this time and tell me everything that's happening to you; a mother worries so. Eunice is a very nice girl even though I do think you would be better off with a girl of your own religion—' "

"Enough."

"Be tolerant, Joe. She's your mother. I don't mind and I will take time—tomorrow—to write her a long letter. I'll send it by Mercury in the company pouch so that she will be sure to get it; Boss doesn't mind. All right, I'll skip the rest of that; we know what she thinks of Protestants. Or ex-Protestants. I wonder what she would think if she heard us chanting *Om Mani Padme*—"

"Kark her drawers."

"Oh, Joe!" She skipped, including the self-invitation. " 'Angela is going to have another baby. The Visitor is sore at her but I gave the Visitor a piece of my mind and I guess that learned her not to mistreat decent people. I can't see why they can't just leave us alone. What's wrong with having a baby?' Which of your sisters is Angela, Joe?"

"Third one. Visitor's right. Mama's wrong. Don' read all, tits. Just read and tell."

"Yes, dear. Nothing more, really, just gossip about neighbors, remarks about the weather. The actual news is that your mother's stomach is better and Angela is pregnant. Give me a moment to shower this red and black off—Boss liked the combo, by the way—and I'll be ready to be painted or to pose or whatever. You can flash a pizza for me while I get clean and I'll gnaw it between times. And, dear? I shouldn't pose later than midnight and I'd be awfully pleased if you would get up when I do tomorrow—rather early, I'm afraid. But you can go back to bed."

"So?"

"For Boss, dearest. To cheer him up." She explained her idea of full-paint costume alternated with erotic styles.

He shrugged. "Glad to. Why gee-string? Silly. Old man dying, let him look. Can't hurt."

"Because, dear. Boss prides himself on being 'modern' and 'keeping up with the times.' But the truth is he formed his ideas so long ago that nakedness wasn't just uncommon, it was a sin. He thinks I'm a nice girl from so far back in the cornstalks that I've never been touched by the changes. As long as I wear a minimum-gee—and paint and shoes—I'm dressed, not naked. By his 'modern' standards, I mean. A nice girl pretending to be naughty to amuse him. Which he likes."

He shook his head. "No roz."

"Oh, but you do, dear. Symbolism, as you have explained to me about art. But it has to be *Boss's* symbols. Nudity doesn't mean a thing to our generation. But it does to Boss. If I leave off that scrap of nylon, then by his symbols I'm not just a sweet girl, naughty-but-nice; I'm a whore."

"Whores okay. Angela one."

A clumsy one, she said under her breath. "Sure they are. But

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not to Boss. The hard part is to guess what his symbols are. I'm twenty-eight and he's over ninety and I can't possibly roz his mind. If I push it too far, he might be angry—even very angry; he might fire me. Then what would we do? We'd have to give up this lovely studio."

Still in lotus, she looked around. Yes, lovely. Aside from the Gadabout parked near the door and the bed in the corner all the rest was the colorful clutter of an artist's studio, always changing and always the same. The steel grid over the high north windows made a pretty pattern—and was so strong that she never worried. She felt warm and safe and happy here.

"Eunice my darling—"

She was startled. Joe used short-talk so habitually that she was always surprised when he chose to shift idiom, even though he could use formal English as well as she could—well, almost, she corrected . . . but he was quite grammatical for a man who had had only a high school practical curriculum. "Yes, dearest?"

"I roz it perfectly. Wasn't sure you did. Just testing, beautiful. Not ninety myself but any artist understands figleaf symbol. Could happen you crowd Mr. Smith's symbols too hard, don' know. But we'll do it. Figleaf so that his mind can lie to itself—no, no, mustn't touch; Mama spank—then I paint you like sex crime looking for spot marked X."

"Oh, good!"

"But never worry about job. Sure, this pad is righteous, good north light, I like it. But we lose it, who cares? Broke don't scare me."

(It scares *me*, dear!) "I love you, darling."

"But we do it for nice old boy dying, not to save studio. Understand?"

"Roz indeed! Joe, you're the nicest husband a girl ever had."

HE DID not answer and got a pained scowl, which she recognized as birth pangs of creativity. So she kept still. Presently he sighed, "Down off ceiling. Problem what to do for Boss solves inspiration that put me up there. Tomorrow you're a mermaid."

"All right."

"And tonight. Upper body sea-green with rosy glow showing through on lips and cheeks and nipples. Lower body golden fish scales blending at waist. Undersea background with sunlight filtering down. Traditional seabottom symbols, romantic. But upside down."

She hesitated. "So?" (Hard to know when to ask, when to keep quiet, when Joe was creating.)

He smiled. "Fool-the-eye. You're swimming. Diving straight down to bottom, back arched, hair streaming, toes pointed—main light dapple-scrimmed for water. Beautiful. But can't wire you, even if had wires—no way to hide harness and hair would hang down and buttocks and breasts would sag—"

"My breasts don't sag!"

"Chill it, Jill. You got beautiful breasts and you know I know. But masses of flesh sag and artist sees

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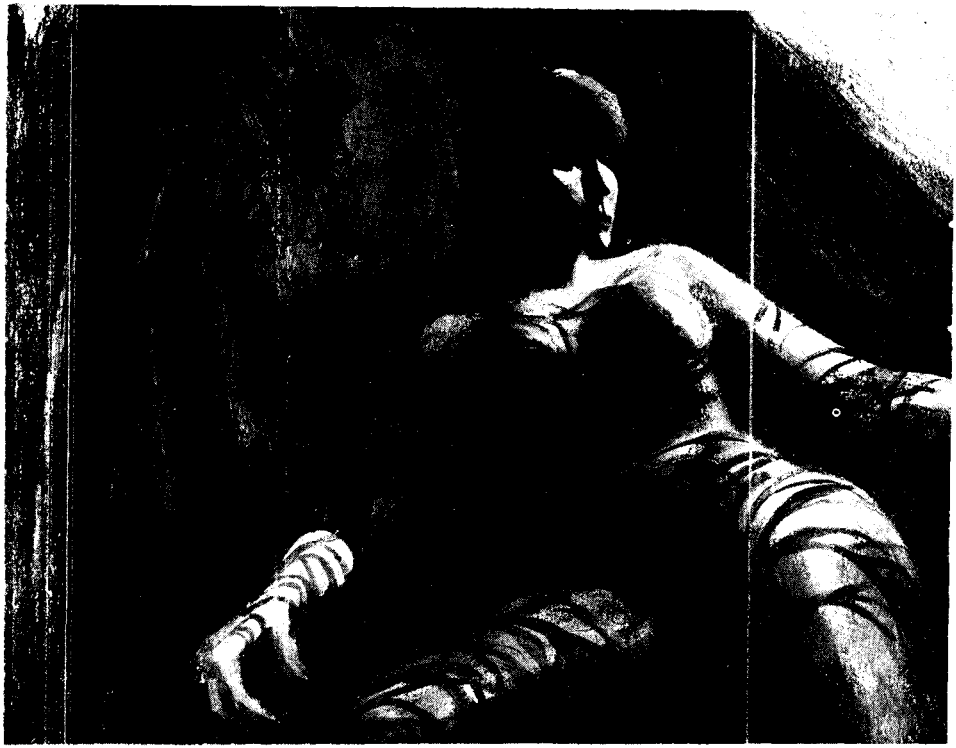

it. Everybody sees, just don' realize. Something wrong, don' know why. Eye not fooled. Has to be real dive, or it's fake. Bad art."

"Well," she said doubtfully, "if you borrowed a stepladder and dragged the mattress under your background, I suppose I could dive off and roll out and not hurt myself. I guess."

"I *don't* guess! Break pretty neck, little stupid. Dive *up*. Not down."

"Huh?"

"I *said*. Background upside down. So jump straight up in air. Like going for hot return in volley ball. I shoot stereo stop-action, a thousandth. Shoot six, seven, eight, nine times till just right. Turn pic upside down—lovely mermaid diving for sea bottom."

"Oh. Yes, I'm stupid."

"Not stupid, just not artist." He started scowling again; she kept quiet. "Too much for one night. Tomorrow paint background, tonight paint you for drill. Then maybe stereo-mug some jumps against any background, more drill. Bed early, up early—paint you again for Boss."

"Fine," she agreed. "But why paint me twice, dear, if I'm to be a mermaid for Boss tomorrow? If you set up the cot for me and I slept alone, I wouldn't disturb a paint job much. Then you could

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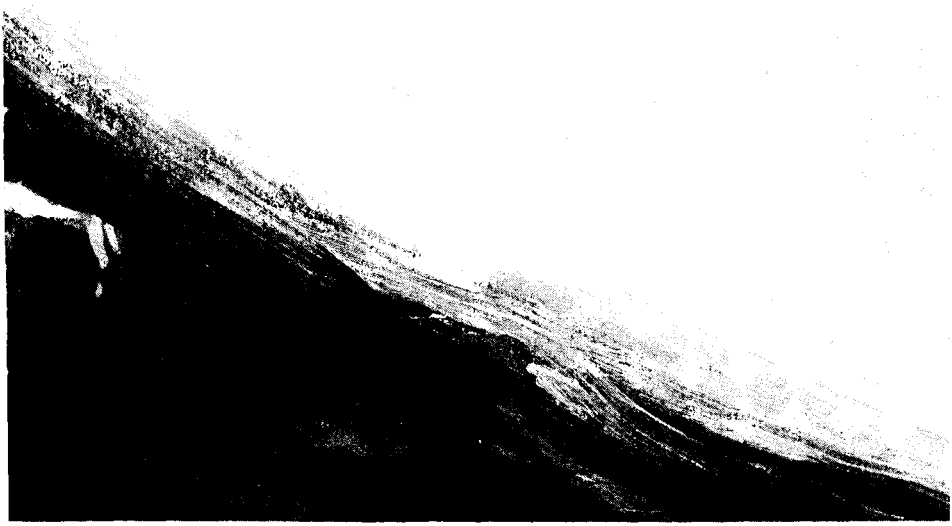

touch it up in the morning. Not get up as early."

He shook his head. "Won't paint same way for Boss. But won't let you sleep in paint anyhow."

"My skin won't break out."

"No, my darling. Your skin don't break out because I don't paint you too much, or too often, or let paint stay on too long—and always damn sure you get it all off, then oil you. But you see, I see, everybody see what happen to girls who paint too much. Pimples, blackheads, itching, scratching—ugly. Sure, we'll paint you for Boss from ears to toes—but not too often and scrub you minute you come home. That's official."

"Yes, sir."

"So scrub jet and scarlet off, while I flash pizza."

A few minutes later she shut off the shower and called out through the door of the bath unit: "What did you say?"

"Forgot. Big Sam stopped by. Pizza ready."

"Cut me a chunk, that's a dear. What did he want? Money?"

"No. Well, I let him have a fin. But stopped to invite us. Sunday. All day meditation. Gigi's pad."

She stepped out into the room, still toweling. "All day, huh? Just us four? Or his whole class?"

"Neither. A Seven Circle."

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"Swinging?"

"Suppose so. Didn't say."

"Swinging." She sighed. "Darling, I don't mind you lending him a five you'll never see. But Big Sam is no guru, he's just a stud. And a bliffy."

"Big Sam and Gigi share what they got, Eunice. And nobody has to swing. Ever."

"Theoretically, yes. But the only good way to break a Circle is never to join it. Especially a Seven Circle. Did you promise? I can grit my teeth and smile—"

"No. Told him had to see you, tell him tomorrow."

"Well? What do you want me to say, dearest?"

"I'll tell him no."

"Dearest, I don't think you answered me. Is there some special reason you want us in this Seven? An art critic perhaps? Or a dealer? If it's Gigi you have on your mind, why not ask her to model some daytime while I'm working? She'd be up here at once, her tail quivering—I've seen her eyeing you."

He shook his head and grinned. "*Nyet*, Yvette. Believe, lass—I stalled Big Sam because possible you wanted to join in. But Big Sam chills me, too—bad aura."

"Oh, I'm so relieved! I'll swing, I promised you that when I asked you to marry me. And I have, the few times you've wanted to. And most were fun—only one struck me as boring. But I like to size up the players."

"Grab pizza, climb throne. Paint legs while you eat."

YES, darling." She mounted the model's throne with a wedge of pizza in each hand; there followed a long period broken only by sounds of chomping, and low profanity that punctuated his alternating pleasure and exasperation. Neither noticed. Joe Branca was deep in the euphoria of creation, his wife was immersed in the warm glow of being cherished.

At last he said, "Down."

"May I look?"

"No. Ribs and tits now. Don't raise arms yet. Want to study."

"As if you didn't know every wrinkle."

"Shut up. Want to think about how to paint 'em in morning." Presently he said, "Been thinking maybe you crowd Boss too hard with only a gee-panty. Solved now."

"So?"

"*Da*. Paint a bra on you."

"But wouldn't that spoil it, dear? Mermaids don't wear bras."

"Was problem. Bad empathy. So use sea shells. Flat curved kind with nubbly backs. You know."

"Sorry but I don't dear. Sea shells are scarce in Iowa."

"No matter. Sea shells fix bad empathy, symbols all match." He grinned. "Pretty one, I'll paint sea-shell bra cups so fool-the-eye that Boss won' know for sure. He'll spend day trying to see whether is real bra or just paint. If he asks—I win."

She gurgled happily. "Joe, you're a genius!"

IV

AS DR. BOYLE came out of the operating theater Mr. Salomon stood up.

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"Doctor!"

Boyle checked his impatient strides. "Oh. You again. Go to hell."

"No doubt I will. But wait a moment, Doctor."

The surgeon answered with controlled fury: "Listen, chum—I've been operating eleven hours with one short break. By now I hate everybody, especially you. So let me be."

"I thought perhaps you could use a drink."

The surgeon suddenly smiled. "Where's the nearest pub?"

"About twenty yards from here. In my car. Parked on this floor. Stocked with Australian beer, both cold and room temperature. And other things. Whisky. Gin. Name it."

"My word, you Yahnk barstahds do know how. Right. But I must change first." Again he turned away.

Salomon again stopped him. "Doctor, I took the liberty of having your street clothes packed into your bag and placed in my car. So let's have that drink at once."

Boyle shook his head and grinned. "You do take liberties—too right. Very well, if you can stand the stink, I'll tub and change at my hotel. 'Lay on, MacDuff!'"

Salomon let it go at that until they were locked into his car and he had poured beer for them—the authentic kangaroo kick for the surgeon, a much weaker American brew for himself; he had tangled with Australian beer in his youth and was wary. The big car started smoothly and continued so; Rockford had been warned that drinking might take place in the passenger compartment.

Salomon waited until his guest had half a glass down him and had sighed in relief. "Doctor, how did it go?"

"Eh? Smoothly. We had planned it, we rehearsed it, we did it. How else? That's a good team you got for me."

"I take it you are saying the operation was successful?"

"'—but the patient died.' That's the rest of the old saw."

Jacob Salomon felt a wave of sorrow and relief. He sighed and answered, "Well, I expected it. Thank you, Doctor. I know you tried."

"Slow down! I don't mean that *this* patient died; I merely completed the cliché. The operation went exactly as planned; the patient was in satisfactory shape when I relinquished control to the support team."

"Then you expect him to live?"

"'It,' not 'he.' That thing back there is not a human being and may never be. It won't die, it *can't* —unless one of your courts gives permission to switch off the machinery. That body is young and healthy; with the support it is receiving it can stay alive—as protoplasm, not as a human being—for any length of time. Years. And the brain was alive when I left; it was continuing to show strong alpha-wave response. It should stay alive, too; it is receiving blood supply from that healthy body. But whether that brain and that body will ever marry into a living human being—what church do you attend?"

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"I don't."

"Too bad, I was about to suggest that you ring up God and ask *Him*, as *I* do not know. Since I saved the retinas and the inner ears —first surgeon ever to do that, by the bye, even though they call me a quack—it might be able to see and hear. Possibly. If the spinal cord fuses, it might regain some motor control, even be able to dispense with some of the artificial support. But I tell you the stark truth, Counselor, the most likely outcome is that that brain will never again be in touch with the outside world in any fashion."

"I hope your misgivings are unfounded," Salomon said mildly. "Your contingent fee depended on your achieving sight, hearing and speech, at a minimum."

"In a pig's arse."

"I'm not authorized to pay it otherwise. Sorry."

"Wrong. There was mention of a bonus, a ridiculously large sum —which I ignored. Look, cobber, you shysters are allowed to work on contingent fees; we butchers have other rules. My *fee* is for operating. I operated. Finis. I'm an ethical surgeon, no matter what the barstahds say about me."

"Which reminds me—" Salomon took an envelope from his pocket. "Here's your fee."

The surgeon pocketed it. Salomon said, "Aren't you going to check it?"

"Why should I? Either I was paid in full. Or I sue. Either way, I couldn't care less. Not now."

"More beer?" Salomon opened another bottle of Down-Under dynamite. "You are paid. In full, in gold, in Switzerland—that envelope contains a note advising you of your account number. Plus an acknowledgment that we pay your expenses, all fees of assisting teams, all computer time, all hospital charges, whatever. But I hope, later, to pay that 'ridiculous' bonus, as you called it."

"Oh, I won't turn down a gift. Research is expensive—and I do want to go on; I would like to be a respectable paragraph in medical histories . . . instead of being sneered at as a charlatan."

"No doubt. Not quite my own reason."

Boyle took a swig of beer and blinked thoughtfully. "I suppose I've been a stinker again. Sorry— I always come out of surgery in a vile mood. I forgot he is your friend."

SALOMON again felt that bittersweet wave of relief and sorrow. He answered carefully, "No, Johann Smith is not my friend."

"So? I had an impression that he was."

"Mr. Smith has no friends. I am a lawyer in his hire. As such, he is entitled to my loyalty."

"I see. I'm glad you aren't emotionally involved, as the prognosis on a brain transplant is never good —as I know better than anyone." Boyle added thoughtfully: "It might work this time. It was a good tissue match, surprisingly good in view of the wide difference between donor and recipient. And identical blood type, that helps. We might luck it. Even disparity in skulls turned out to be no problem once I could see that brain."

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"Then why are you gloomy?"

"Do you know how many millions of nerve connections are involved? Think I could do them all in eleven hours? Or eleven thousand hours? We don't try; we just work on the nerves of the head, then butt the raw ends of two spinal cords together—and sit back and spin our prayer wheels. Maybe they fuse, maybe they don't—and no one knows why."

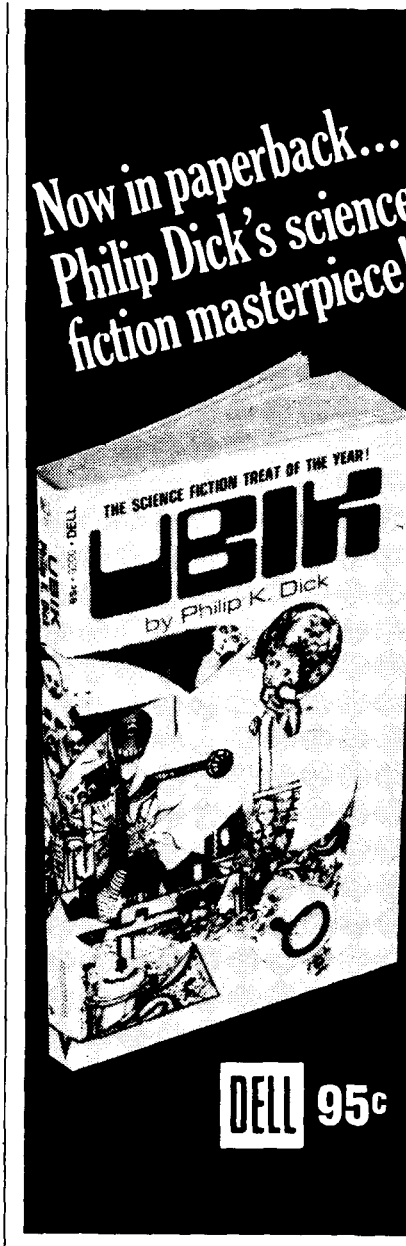
"So I understood. What I don't understand is how those millions of connections can ever take place. Yet apparently you were successful with two chimpanzees."

"Bloody! I *was* successful. Sorry. The human nervous system is infinitely inventive in defending itself. Instead of reconnecting old connections it finds new paths—if it can—and learns to use them. Do you know the psych lab experiment with inverting spectacles?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Some student has inverting lenses taped to his eyes. For a day or two he sees everything upside down, has to be led by the hand, fed, escorted to the jakes. Then, rather suddenly, he sees everything right side up again; the brain has switched a few hundred thousand connections and is now interpreting the new data successfully. At this point we remove the spectacles from the volunteer chump—and now his bare eyes see the world upside down. So he goes through it a second time—and *again* the brain finds new paths and eventually the images flip over again and he sees the world normally.

"Something somewhat analogous to that happened to my two



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prize chimps, Abélard and Héloise. Nothing at first, thought I had still another failure. Then they started to twitch and we had to restrain them to keep them from hurting themselves—motor action but no control. Like a very young baby. But in time the brains learned to manage their new bodies. Don't ask me how; I'm a surgeon and won't guess—ask a psychologist, they love to guess. Or ask a priest; you'll get as good an answer and maybe better. Say, isn't your driver chap taking us around the barn? My hotel was only five minutes from the medical center."

"I must now admit to having taken another liberty, Doctor. Your luggage was packed, your hotel bill has been paid and all your things were moved to my guest room."

"My word. Why?"

"Better security."

"That hotel seemed secure to me. Armed guards on every door, more armed men operating the lifts—I could not get in or out without showing my ID at least thrice. Reminded me of the army. Hadn't realized what an armed camp the States are. Isn't it rather a nuisance?"

"Yes. But one grows used to it. Your hotel is safe enough, physically. But the press are onto us now and they can get inside. And so can the police."

Boyle looked troubled but not panicky. "Legal complications? You assured me that all that sort of thing had been taken care of."

"I did. It has. The donor was married, as I told you, and by great luck husband and wife had given pre-consent. We had a good many thousands of that blood type quietly signed up—and paid retainers—but we couldn't predict that one would be accidentally killed in time; the statistical projection did not favor it. But one of them was indeed killed and there were no complications—no insuperable ones," Salomon corrected, thinking of a bag of well-worn Federal Reserve notes, "and a court permitted our action as 'useful and necessary research.' Nevertheless, the press will stir up a storm and some other court may decide to look into it. Doctor, I can put you in Canada in an hour, anywhere on this planet in a day—even on the Moon without much delay. If you so choose."

"Hmm. Wouldn't mind going to the Moon, I've never been there. You say my clothes are in your guest room?"

"Yes. And you are most welcome."

"Is there a tub of hot water nearby?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Then I'll ask for another beer and that hot tub and about ten hours sleep. I've been arrested before. Doesn't worry me."

V

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH SMITH was somewhere else. Where, he did not know, nor care, nor wonder . . . did not know that he was himself, was not aware of himself nor of anything, was not aware that he was not aware.

Then slowly, over eons, he came

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up from the nothingness of total anesthesia, surfaced into dreaming. The dreams went on for unmeasured time, endlessly . . . Mrs. Schmidt, can Yonny come out and play . . . Wuxtra! Horrible atrocities in Belgium, read all about it! . . . Johann, don't *ever* walk in like that without knocking, you bad, *bad* boy . . . under a cabbage leaf . . . more margin before the market opens tomorrow . . . like hell a cabbage leaf; it comes out of her belly button Yoho you don't know nothing . . . Johnny you know it's not nice to do that and what if my father came downstairs . . . a pretty girl is like a melody . . . hey get a load of that not a damn thing on her boobs . . . sergeant I volunteered once and that's enough for a lifetime . . . Our Father Which art in Heaven hallowed be thy Name of the game is look out for yourself Smith old Buddy you co-signed the note and I have other fish to Friday at the latest and that's a promise Johann darling I don't know how you could even bring yourself to think such a thing of your own wife is a man's responsibility Mr. Smith and I'm sure the court will agree that four thousand per monthlies is a very modest girl would never do such a thing Schmidt and if I ever catch you hanging around my daughter again I'll shoot the whole works they're not worth the paper they're printed on Johann I don't know what your father will say when he gets home on the range where the deer and the antelope play square with me and you'll get a fair shake it, girlie, shake it, shake it twice is

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regulation shake it thrice pudding with creamed in her coffin my head off and her old man heard us and that queered it not queer Johann just curious you understand me old body boy I aint got no body and no body works very long for some body else if he expects to get ahead in the world o' business girl has got just as much right to be treated like a lady as any body seen my girl's best friend is her cherish as long as you both shall live right and work hard and pay your bills of lading son goes down and the stars come out of my room at once my husband would kill me and the neighbors are always snooping where did you leave your bicycle would pay for itself in no time Pop if I get this paper rout and in full retreat as we go to press me closer Johnny you're so huge national debt will never be paid off and all our companies' policies must bet on inflation so borrow now and pay later than you think I'm that sort of a girl simply because I let you go on to college to be a teacher son but now I see by the dawn's early warning system is useless gentlemen without second-strike capabilities of sustained growth when treated last time so it's your treat this time you treat me nice and I treat you nice you-nice Eunice *Eunice*! where did that girl go I've lost Rome and I've lost Gaul but worst of all I've lost Eunice somebody find Eunice . . . coming Boss . . . where have you been right here all along Boss—

HIS dreams went on endlessly in full stereo—sound, sight, odor, touch—and always surrealistic which he never noticed. They flowed through him, or he through them, with perfect logic. To him.

Meanwhile the world flowed on around him—and forgot him. The attempt at transplanting a living brain offered opportunity for much loose talk by video commentators, plus guest "experts" who were encouraged to add their own mixture of prejudice, speculation and bias in the name of "science." A judge in need of publicity issued a warrant for the arrest of "Dr. Lyndon Doyle (sic) but Dr. Lindsay Boyle was outside jurisdiction before the warrant was signed and long before the name was straightened out. A famous and very stylish evangelist prepared a sermon denouncing the transplant, using as a text "Vanity of Vanities."

But on the third day a spectacular and unusually bloody political assassination crowded Johann Smith out of the news and the evangelist found that he could use the sermon by changing a few sentences—which he did, understanding instinctively the American lust for the blood of the mighty.

As usual, the unlicensed birth rate exceeded the licensed rate while the abortion rate exceeded both. Upjohn International declared an extra dividend. The backing and filling for the upcoming Presidential campaign speeded up with a joint announcement by the national committees of the two conservative parties, the SDS and the PLA, that they would hold their conventions together (while preserving mutual autonomy) for

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the (unannounced but understood) purpose of re-electing the incumbent. The chairman of the extreme left-wing Constitutional Liberation Rally denounced it as a typical crypto-fascist capitalistic plot and predicted a November victory for Constitutional freedom. The splinter parties, Democratic, Socialist, and Republican, met quietly (few members and almost no delegates under sixty-five) and stole away without causing more than a ripple in the news.

In the Middle East an earthquake killed nine thousand people in three minutes and brought close the ever-present possibility of war through disturbing the balance of terror. The Sino-American Lunar Commission announced that the Lunar colonies were now 87% self-sufficient in proteins and carbohydrates, and raised the subsidized out-migration quota but again refused to relax the literacy requirement.

Johann Sebastian Bach Smith dreamed on.

AFTER an unmeasured time (how measure a dream?) Smith woke enough to be aware of himself—the reflexive self-awareness of waking as contrasted with the unquestioning and unexplicit self-experience of dreaming. He knew who he was, Johann Sebastian Bach Smith, a very old man—not a baby, not a boy, not any of his younger selves—and was aware of his sensory surroundings, which were zero: darkness, silence, absence of any physical sensation, not even pressure, touch, kinesthesia.

He wondered if the operation had started and what it would feel like when he died. He did not worry about pain; he had been assured that the brain itself had no pain receptors and that he was being anesthetized solely to keep him quiet and unworried while the job was done—besides, pain had not worried Smith in years; it was his constant companion, almost an old friend.

Presently he went back to sleep and to more dreams, unaware that his brain-wave pattern was being monitored and had caused great excitement when change in rhythm and peak had shown that the patient was awake.

Again he was awake and this time gave thought to the possibility that this nothingness was death. He considered the idea without panic, having come to terms with death more than a half century earlier. If this was death, it was neither the heaven he had been promised as a child, nor the hell he had long since ceased to believe in, nor even the total lack of *self* he had come to expect—it was just one damn big bore.

He slept again, unaware that the physician in charge of his life-support team had decided that the patient had been awake long enough and had slowed his breathing and made a slight change in his blood chemistry.

He woke again and tried to take stock of the situation. If he was dead—and there seemed no longer reason to doubt it—what did he have left and how could he cut his losses? Assets: none. Correction: one asset, memory. He had a re-

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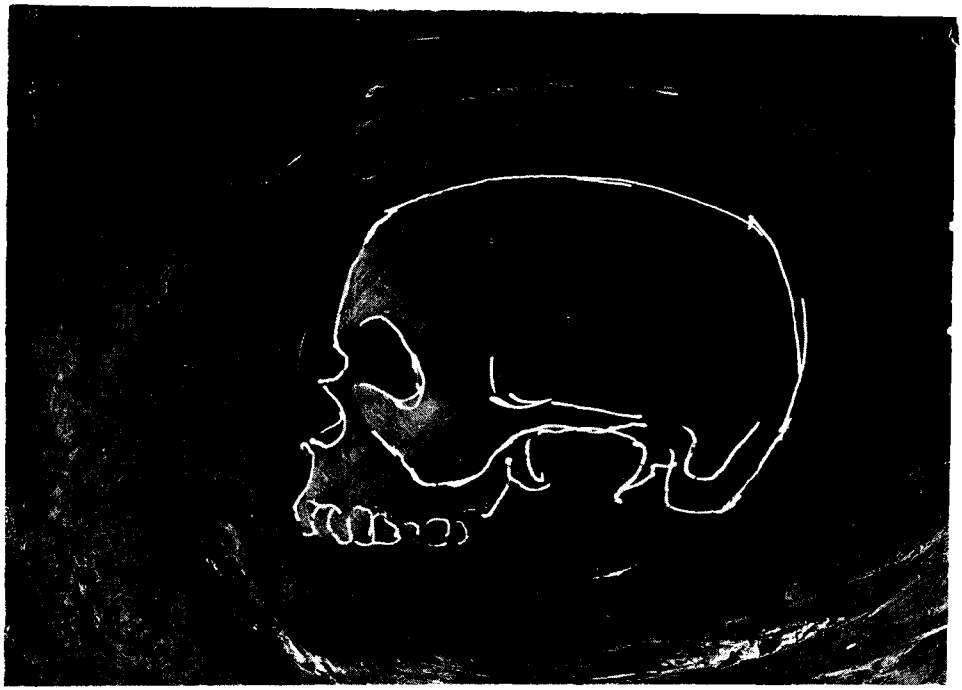

cent memory-of-a-memory, vague and undefined, of confused and crazy dreams—probably from anesthesia and no use to him—plus other memories older but much sharper of being (or having been) Johann Smith. Well, Johann you old bastard, if you and me are going to have to spend all eternity locked in this limbo we had better get to work on total recall of everything we ever did.

Everything? Or concentrate on the good parts? No, a stew had to have salt or it was too bland. Try to remember all of it. If we have all eternity with nothing to play but this one rerun, we're going to want to have *all* of it on tap . . . as even the best parts may get boring after a few thousand times.

Still, it wouldn't hurt to concentrate—just for practice—on some exceptionally pleasant memory. So what'll it be, partner? There are only four top subjects, the rest are sideshows: Money, sex, war, and death. So which do we choose? *Right!* You're correct, Eunice; I'm a dirty old man and my only regret (and a sharp one!) is that I didn't find you forty or fifty years back. When you were not yet a gleam in your father's eye, more's the pity. Tell me, girl, were those sea-shell doodads a brassiere or just paint on your pretty skin? Euchred myself on

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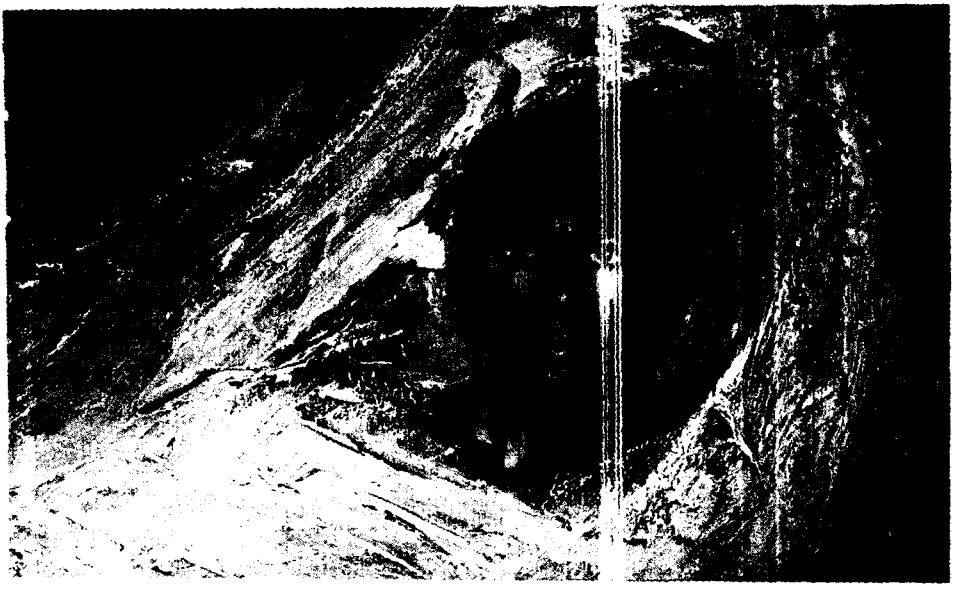

that one—should have asked and let you sass me. So tell great grandpappy. Give me a phone call and tell me. Sorry, I can't tell you the wavelength, dear; it's unlisted.

Golly, you looked cute!

Let's try another one—no chance that I'll forget you, Eunice my dear, but I never laid a finger on you, damn it. Let's go way, way back to one we did lay a finger on. Our very first piece? No, you mucked that up pretty badly, you clumsy lout. The second one? Ah, yes, she was the cat's pajamas! Mrs. Wicklund. First name? Did I ever know her first name? Certainly I never called her by it, not then or later. Even though she let me come back for more. Let me? Encouraged me, set it up.

Let's see, I was fourteen, fourteen and a half, and she must have been . . . thirty-five? I remember her mentioning that she had been married fifteen years, so call it thirty-five at a guess. No matter, it was the first time I ever encountered a female who wanted it, managed to let me know that she wanted it, then without any bobbles could take charge of a lanky, too-eager, almost-virgin boy, steady him, lead him through it, make him enjoy it, let him know she enjoyed it—make him feel good about it afterward.

God bless your generous soul,

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Mrs. Wicklund! If you are lost somewhere in this darkness—for you must have died many years sooner than I did—I hope you remember me and are as happy in remembering me as I am in remembering you.

All the details now— Your flat was right under ours. Cold windy afternoon and you gave me a quarter (big money then, a dime was standard) for going to the grocery for you. For what? How good is your memory, you horny old goat? Correction: horny old 'ghost.' What have I got left to be horny with? Never mind, I *am*—it's up *here*, Doc. Half a pound of sliced boiled ham, a sack of russet potatoes, a dozen ranch eggs (seven cents a dozen then—my God!), a ten-cent loaf of Holsum bread and—something else. Oh, yes, a spool of sixty white cotton thread at the notions shop next to Gilmore's drugstore. Mrs. Baum's shop—two sons, one killed in War One and the other made a name for himself in electronics. But let's get back to *you*, Mrs. Wicklund.

You heard me bring my bike into the hallway and opened your door and I carried your groceries on through to your kitchen. You paid me and offered me hot cocoa and—why wasn't I nervous about Mama? Pop at work and Mr. Wicklund, too; that figured—but where was Mama? Oh, yes, her sewing circle afternoon.

So while I drank cocoa and was being polite, you cranked your Victrola and put on a record—uh—*Margie*, it was, and you asked me if I knew how to dance? You taught me all right—on the sofa.

A LIFE-SUPPORT technician studied an oscilloscope, noted an increase in brain activity, concluded that the patient might be frightened and decided to tranquilize. Johann Smith slipped gently into sleep without knowing it—to the scratchy strains of a mechanical phonograph. He was "fox-trotting," so she told him. He did not care what it was called; his arm was around her waist, hers was around his neck, her warm clean odor was sweet in his nostrils. Presently she seduced him.

After a long, ecstatic and utterly satisfying time he said, "Eunice honey, I didn't know you could fox-trot."

She smiled into his eyes. "You never asked me, Boss. Can you reach past me and shut off the Victrola?"

"Sure, Mrs. Wicklund."

VI

JOHANN SMITH became aware that this limbo was no longer featureless—head resting on something, mouth unpleasantly dry and felt crowded, as if with the sort of junk a dental surgeon inflicts on his victims. There was still total blackness but not quite dead silence. A sucking noise—

Any sensation was most welcome. Johann shouted, "*Hey! I lived through it!*"

Two rooms away the monitoring technician on watch jumped up so fast he knocked over his chair. "Patient's trying to articulate! Get Dr. Brenner!"

Brenner answered quietly over the voice monitor. "I'm with the

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patient, Cliff. Get a team in here. And notify Dr. Hedrick and Dr. Garcia."

"Right away!"

Johann said, "Hey, damn it! Isn't *anybody* here?" The words came out as incoherent grunts.

The doctor touched a wand speaker to the patient's teeth, held the microphone hooked to it against his own throat. "Mr. Smith, do you hear me?"

The patient mumbled again, more loudly and forcefully. The doctor answered, "Mr. Smith, I'm sorry but I cannot understand you. If you hear me, make one sound. Any sort but just one."

The patient grunted once.

"Good, wonderful—you can hear me. All right, one sound by itself means Yes; two sounds mean No. If you understand me, answer with two sounds. Two grunts."

Smith grunted twice.

"Good, now we can talk. One sound for Yes, two for No. Do you hurt?"

Two grunts—"Uh . . . ko!"

"Fine! Now we try something else. Your ears are covered and completely soundproofed; my voice is reaching your inner ears through your teeth and upper jawbone. I'm going to remove part of the covering on your left ear and speak to you that way. The sounds may be painfully loud at first, so I will start with whispers. Understand me?"

One grunt—

Smith felt gentle firmness as something pulled loose. "Do you still hear me?"

"Uh . . . ko—"

"Now do you hear me?"

"Uh . . . *ko* . . . ah . . . ee . . . oh . . . ee . . . oo . . . ow!"

"I think that was a sentence. Don't try to talk yet. Just one grunt, or two."

Johann said, "Of course I can't talk, you damned idiot!" Take this junk out of my mouth!" The vowels came through fairly clearly; consonants were distorted or missing.

"Doctor, how can the patient talk with all that gear in the way?"

Brenner said quietly, "Shut up, Nurse. Mr. Smith, we have an aspirator down your throat to keep you from choking on phlegm, drowning in your own saliva. I can't remove it yet, so try to be patient. Besides that, your eyes are masked. Your eye specialist will decide when that comes off. I can't —I'm the life-support specialist on duty at the moment, not the physician managing your case; that's Dr. Hedrick, assisted by Dr. Garcia. I can't do much more than I have till one of them gets here. Are you comfortable? One grunt, or two."

One grunt—

"Good. I'll stay here with you. And talk to you if you want me to. Do you?"

One grunt—

"Okay, I will. You can talk with more than a Yes or No any time you wish. By spelling. I'll recite the alphabet, slowly, and you stop me with one grunt when I reach a letter you want. And so on for the next letter, until it's spelled out. It's slow . . . but neither one of us is going anywhere. Want to try it?"

One grunt—

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"Good. I've had lots of practice at it; I've been on many a life-support watch in which the patient could not talk but was awake and perfectly rational. As you are," the doctor added, lying hopefully, one eye on the master oscilloscope. "But bored, of course. Very bored—that's the worst part for a patient in life-support; he's bored silly, yet we can't let him sleep all the time; it's not good for him and sometimes we need his cooperation. All right, any time you want to spell anything, give three distinct grunts and I'll prove I know my abc's."

Three grunts—

"A . . b . . c . . d . . e . . f—" Johann grunted at "r."

" 'R?" Dr. Brenner repeated. "Don't bother to answer if I'm right. Okay, first letter is 'r.' A . . b . . c . . d . . "

The message read: "Right ear."

"Do you want the plug removed from your right ear?"

One grunt—

Carefully the doctor removed it. "Testing," he said. "Cincinnati, sixty-six, Susannah. Are you hearing with both ears? Does my voice seem to move from side to side?"

One grunt, followed by three grunts—

"Okay, spelled message. A . . b . . c—"

Shortly the doctor said, " 'Nobody'? Is that the first word of your message?"

Double grunt—

"All right, I'll try again. A . . b—" He was interrupted by a series of grunts and stopped. "You don't want me to spell again . . . yet 'Nobody' is not the first word of your message. But I would have sworn that I got it right. 'Nobody—' Uh . . . hey! 'No . . . body'—two words?"

One emphatic grunt—

"Are you trying to tell me that you feel as if you had no body? Can't feel it?"

Grunt—

"Oh! Of course you can't feel it; you haven't finished healing. But honestly," the doctor went on, lying with the skill of long practice, "your progress has been amazingly fast. Both speech and hearing so soon, that's wonderfully encouraging. In fact you've just won a bet for me. Five hundred," he went on, still lying, "and at that I demanded more than twice the recovery time you've shown. And now I'm going to double my winnings by putting them back and betting that you'll have full recovery of the use of your whole body in no longer time. Because this is a wonderfully healthy body you have even though you can't feel it yet. Marvelous repair factor."

Triple grunt— Then the spelled message was: "How long?"

"How long since your operation? Or how long until you get the use of your whole body?"

DR. BRENNER was saved by the bell. He stopped reciting the alphabet and said. "Half a moment, Mr. Smith; Dr. Hedrick has arrived. I must report. Nurse will stay with you—just let the patient rest, Nurse. This has been tiring."

Outside the door Dr. Brenner stopped the case-managing physician, saying, "Dr. Hedrick, one

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moment before you go in. You've checked the remotes?"

"Certainly. Awake-normal, apparently."

"And rational, in my opinion. I have removed the central stopples from both ear pads and we have been talking, spell-and-grunt, killing time until you—"

"I heard you on monitor, assumed you must have opened the ears. You take a lot on yourself, Doctor."

Dr. Brenner stiffened, then answered coldly, "Doctor—your patient, conceded. But I was here alone and had to use my own judgment. If you wish me to leave the case, you have only to say so."

"Don't be so damned touchy, young man. Now let's go in and see the patient. Our patient."

"Yes, sir."

They went inside. Dr. Hedrick said, "I'm Dr. Hedrick, Mr. Smith, physician in charge of your case. Congratulations! Welcome back to our weary world. This is a triumph for everyone—and vindication for a great man, Dr. Boyle."

Three grunts—

"You wish to spell a message?"

One grunt—

"If you will wait a moment, we will remove some items from your mouth and you can talk instead." (With great good luck, Hedrick amended to himself—but I never expected the case to progress even this far. That arrogant butcher really *is* a great man. To my surprise.) "Would that suit you?"

An emphatic grunt—

"Good. Hand aspiration, Dr. Brenner. Adjust those lights, Nurse. Monitor watch! Find out what's keeping Dr. Feinstein."

Johann Smith felt hands working rapidly but gently, then Dr. Hedrick said, "Let me check, Doctor. Very well, remove the jaw wedges. Mr. Smith, we will have to aspirate every few moments—I'd rather not have to force you to cough up fluid. Or go after it the hard way. But you may talk if you wish."

"Aye-*gah*-aye-*hay*-dih!"

"Slowly, slowly. You're having to learn to talk all over again, like a baby. That same remark now—but slowly and carefully."

"By . . . *God* . . . I . . . *made* . . . it!"

"You surely did. The first man in history to have his brain moved into a new body—and lived through it. And you will go on living. This is a fine body. Healthy."

"But . can't . peal—feel—a damn . . *thing* . from . chin . down."

"Lucky you," said the Doctor. "Because we've got you restrained all over against the day—soon, I hope—" but never, more likely, he added to himself—"when you will start feeling your entire new body. When that day comes you may jerk uncontrollably—if we don't have you restrained. Then you'll have to go to work and learn to control your body. Like a new baby. Practice. Possibly long and tedious practice."

"How . . . long?"

"I don't know. Dr. Boyle's chimps made it rather quickly, I understand. But it might take you as long as it takes a baby to learn to walk. But why worry about that

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now? You've got a new body, good for many, many years—why, you might be the first human being to live two hundred years. So don't be in a hurry. Now rest, please—I've got to examine you. Chin screen, Nurse."

"The patient's eyes are covered, Doctor."

"Ah, yes, so they are. Mr. Smith, when Dr. Feinstein arrives, we will see if he wants to expose your eyes to light today. In the meantime—uncover the patient, Nurse."

UNCOVERED, the new body was still mostly covered. A plastic corset "iron lung" encased the torso from chin to pubis; arms and legs were strapped and the straps cushioned; urethral and anal catheters were in place and secured; two blood vessels were in use, one for nourishment, the other for monitoring; four others were prepared for use but currently stopped off. Wires were here and there. The body inside this dismal mess could have been one that Michelangelo would have treasured but the assemblage of artifact and protoplasm could seem beautiful only to a medical specialist.

Dr. Hedrick seemed pleased. He took a stylus from his pocket, suddenly scratched the sole of the right foot—got the reflex he expected, got no response from Johann Smith, also as expected.

"Dr. Hedrick?" came a voice from the bed console.

"Yes."

"Dr. Feinstein is operating."

"Very well." He indicated to a nurse that he wanted the body covered. "Did you hear that, Mr. Smith? Your ophthalmologist is in surgery, can't see you today. Just as well, as you have had enough for one day. It's time for you to sleep."

"No. You...do...it. My... eyes."

"No. We wait for Dr. Feinstein."

"No! You.are.in.charge."

"So I am and your eyes won't be touched until your specialist is present."

"Damn...you. Get...Jake... Sal.o.mon!"

"Mr. Salomon is in Europe, will be notified that you are awake, and he may possibly be here tomorrow. I couldn't say. In the meantime I want you to rest. Sleep."

"Won't!"

"Ah, but you will." Dr. Hedrick pointed to Dr. Brenner, nodded. "As you pointed out, I am in charge. Want to know what I am certain you will sleep? Because we are slowing your breathing rate and introducing into your blood stream a harmless drug that will insure that you do sleep. So goodnight, Mr. Smith, and again—my congratulations."

"Damn . . . your . . . ins . insuffera—" Johann Smith slept.

Once he half roused. "Eunice?" (Right here, Boss. Go back to sleep.) He slept on.

VII

"HI, JAKE!"

"Hello, Johann. How do you feel?"

"Mean as a fox with its tail in a

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trap except when these tyrants dope me with something that makes me sweetness-and-light in spite of myself. Where the hell have you been? Why didn't you come when I sent for you?"

"On vacation. First decent vacation I've had in fifteen years. Any objections?"

"Get your feathers down. You do have a nice tan. And taken off a little weight, too, I think. Okay, okay—though I don't mind saying I was disappointed that you didn't trot back for a day or two at least when I woke up. Hurt my feelings."

"Humph! You have no feelings. Never did."

"Now, Jake—I do so have feelings, just never was one for showing them. But, damn it, I *needed* you."

The lawyer shook his head. "You didn't need me. I know why you thought you did. You wanted me to interfere with Dr. Hedrick's management of your case. Which I would not have done. So I extended my vacation to avoid useless argument."

Johann grinned at him. "Always the sly one, Jake. Okay, I've never been one to fret about yesterday's trouble. But now that you're back —well, Hedrick's a good doctor . . . but he's high-handed with me when it's not necessary. So we'll change that. I'll tell you what I want and you tell Hedrick—and if he balks, you can let him know that he is not indispensable."

"No."

"What do you mean, 'No?' "

"I mean *No*. Johann, you still require constant medical attention. I haven't interfered with Dr. Hedrick up to now and the results have been good. I won't interfere now."

"Oh, for Pete's sake, Jake. Sure, sure, you have my interests at heart. But you don't understand the situation. I'm no longer in a critical condition; I'm convalescent. Look, here's late news, important. Know what I did this morning during physiotherapy? Moved my right index finger. On *purpose*, Jake. Know what that means?"

"Means you can bid in an auction. Or signal a waiter."

"Crab apples. Wiggled my toes a little, too. Jake, in a week I'll be *walking*, unassisted. Why, I spend thirty minutes each day now without this lung thing, this corset . . . and when they put it back on me, it's simply set to assist, if necessary. But despite all this wonderful progress, I'm still treated like a wired-up laboratory monkey. Allowed to stay awake only a short time each day—hell, they even shave me while I'm asleep and God alone knows what else; I don't. I'm strapped down every minute that at least six people don't have their hands on me for physio. If you don't believe me, lift the sheet and take a look. I'm a prisoner. In my own house."

Salomon didn't move. "I believe you."

"Move that chair around so that I can see you better. They've even got my head clamped—now I ask you, is *that* necessary?"

"No opinion. Ask your doctor." Salomon stayed where he was.

"I asked *you* . . . because I'm

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fed up with his top-sergeant behavior."

"And I declined to express an opinion in a field in which I have no competence. Johann, you're getting well, that's evident. But only a fool replaces a quarterback who is winning. *I* never thought you would live through the operation. I don't think you did, either."

"Well . . . truthfully, I didn't. I was betting my life—literally—on a long gamble. But I won."

"Then why don't you try being grateful? *Instead of behaving like a spoiled child!*"

"Temper, Jake, temper—why, you sound like *me*."

"God knows I don't want to sound like *you*. But I mean it. Show gratitude. Praise the Lord—and Dr. Hedrick."

"And Dr. Boyle, Jake. Yes, I *am* grateful, truly I am. I've been snatched back from the edge of death—and now have every reason to expect a wonderful new life—and all I risked was a few more weeks of a life that had grown intolerable." Johann smiled. "I can't express how grateful I am, there are no words. My eyes are twenty/twenty again and I'm seeing shades of color I had forgotten existed. I can hear high notes I haven't heard in years. I get 'em to play symphonies for me and I can follow the piccolo clear up to the roof. And the violins. I can hear all sorts of high sounds now, higher than ever—even my new voice sounds high; he must have been a tenor. And I can *smell*, Jake—and I lost my last trace of a sense of smell years ago. Nurse, walk past me and let me smell you."

The nurse, a pretty redhead, smiled, said nothing, did not move from the bed's console.

JOHANN went on, "I'm even allowed to eat now, once a day—eat and swallow, I mean, not a blasted tube. Jake, did you know that Cream o' Wheat tastes better than filet mignon? It can. Hell, *everything* tastes good now; I had forgotten what fun it is to eat. Jake, it's so grand to be alive—in this body—that I can't wait to go out in the country and walk in fields and climb a hill and look at trees and watch birds. And clouds. Sunbathe. Ice-skate, maybe. Square-dance. Ever square-dance, Jake?"

"I used to be good at it. No time for it, late years."

"I never had time for it even when I was young. I'm going to *take* time, now. Reminds me, who's minding the store?"

"Teal, of course. He wants to see you."

"You see him, I'm too busy learning to use my new body. And enjoying it. Do I have any money left? Not that I give a hoot."

"You want the ungarnished truth?"

"You can't scare me, Jake. If I have to sell this house to pay off this gang of jailers, it won't worry me. Might be fun. I can tell you this: I'll never be on Welfare. I'll get by—always have, always will."

"Brace yourself. You're worth more than ever."

"Huh? Oh, what a shame! When I was just beginning to enjoy being broke."

"Hypocrite."

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"Not at all, Jake. I—"

"Hypocrite, I said. Oh, hush up. Your fortune had already reached the take-off point, where it can't possibly be spent no matter how you try. It just keeps growing. I didn't even spend all your income on this operation and all that went with it. However, you no longer control Smith Enterprises."

"So?"

"Yes. I encouraged Teal to borrow money and buy some of your voting shares; it gave him incentive in 'minding the store.' And it looked better. Also, as de facto chairman of the board, I thought it would look better if I owned a bigger block, too, so I traded you some blue chips and tax-exempts for some of your senior-corporation voting stock. At present two of us—you and I, or you and Teal—hold voting control. But no one of us. However, I'll trade back any time you want to resume control."

"God forbid!"

"We'll leave the matter open, Johann. I was not trying to take advantage of your illness."

"No, Jake. If I don't have controlling interest, I don't have even a moral responsibility to look out for the company. I'll resign as chairman of the board—and you can be chairman, or Teal, or you can put it up for grabs."

"Wait till you're well."

"Okay, but I shan't change my mind. But now about that other matter—uh, Nurse, don't you have to go empty something, or wash your hands, or check the roof to see if it's on tight? I want a private talk with my lawyer."

She smiled and shook her head. "No, sir. You know I can't leave the room even a moment without being relieved. But I'm authorized by Dr. Hedrick to do this, sir: I can shut off the voice monitor to the remotes, then go over in that far corner and watch video with the sound turned up high so that you'll be certain I can't hear you. Dr. Hedrick said that you might want privacy in speaking with Mr. Salomon."

"Well! The old bug—bug-hunter is human after all. You do that, Nurse."

Shortly, Johann was able to say quietly, "You saw that, Jake? God knows there could be no harm in you alone watching me a few minutes—you could call for help if I choked or something. Anyhow, any trouble would show on their dials. But, no, they chaperone me every second and won't agree to the most harmless request. Look, very quietly now—do you have a pocket mirror on you?"

"Eh? Never carried one in my life."

"A pity. Well, have one on you next time you're in to see me. Tomorrow, I hope. Jake, Hedrick is a good doctor, conceded—but he won't tell me *anything*. Just this week I asked him whose body this had been—and he wasn't even polite enough to lie; he just told me that it was none of my business."

"It isn't."

"Huh?"

"Remember the contract I worked out? It said—"

"Never read it. Your pidgin."

"I told you; you didn't listen. Donor's privacy to be respected

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unless donor specifically grants permission to breach it . . . and even then his estate must confirm after death. In this case neither proviso was met. So you can never be told."

"Oh, rats. I can find out, once I'm up and around. I would never publicize it; I just want to know."

"No doubt you will find out. But *I* won't be a party to breaching a contract with the dead."

"Hmm. Jake, you're a stiff-necked old bastard; it wouldn't do any harm. All right, all right. But get me that mirror. Look, you can get me one now. Go into my bathroom, usual excuse, and look around. Search. Four or five small mirrors in there, drawers and such —or were the last time I was on my feet. Almost certainly still are. Just don't let a nurse see it. In your pocket. Or under your jacket."

"Why don't you simply ask for one?"

"Because they won't let me have one, Jake. You may think I'm paranoid but I *am* being persecuted by this high-and-mighty doctor. Won't let me see my new face in a mirror. Okay, it's probably scarred; I don't care. Won't let me look at myself *at all*. When they work on me they put up a chin screen; I haven't even seen my hands. Would you believe it, I don't even know what *color* I am. Am I a soul? Or a honk? Or something else? It's maddening."

"JOHANN, it might be literally maddening for you to see yourself. Before you have your strength back."

"What? Oh, be your age, Jake; you know me better than that. If I'm the ugliest thing since wart hogs and covered with purple stripes, I can take it." Johann grinned. "I was ugly as sin before the operation; any change for the worse can't be great. But I tell you no lie, old friend; if they keep treating me like a retarded child, they really *will* drive me off the rails."

Salomon sighed. "I'm sorry to have to tell you this, Johann, but it is no news to me that they won't let you see yourself in a mirror—"

"What?"

"Steady down. I've discussed it with Dr. Hedrick and with the psychiatrist working with him. They are of the opinion that you could suffer a severe emotional shock—one that might give you a grave setback, even (as you say) 'drive you off the rails'—if you saw your new self before you are fully well and strong."

Johann Smith did not answer at once. Then he said quietly, "Pig whistle. I *know* I'm physically something else now. What harm do they think it could do me?"

"The psychiatrist mentioned the possibility of a split personality."

"Move around and look me in the eyes. Jake Salomon, do you believe that?"

"My opinion is neither relevant nor competent. I am *not* going to buck your physicians. Nor help you to outwit them."

"So that's how the wind sets. Jake . . . I am sorry to be forced to say this—but you are not the only lawyer in this city."

"So I know. I am sorry—truly

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sorry—to be forced to say this, Johann—but I am the only lawyer you can turn to."

"*What do you mean?*"

"Johann, you are now a ward of the court. I am your guardian."

Johann Smith was slow to answer, then barely whispered: "Conspiracy. I never thought it of you, Jake."

"Johann, Johann!"

"Do you mean to keep me locked up forever? If not, what's the price to turn me loose? Is the judge in on it? And Hedrick?"

Salomon controlled himself. "Please, Johann, let me speak. I'm going to pretend that you never said what you did say . . . and I'll have a transcript of the proceedings brought here for you to see. Hell, I'll have the judge himself fetch them. But you've got to listen."

"I'm listening. How can I help listening? I'm a prisoner."

"Johann, you will cease being a ward as soon as you are able to appear in court—in person—and convince the judge—Judge McCampbell, it is, an honest man as you know—convince McCampbell that you are no longer *non compos mentis*. He took the step reluctantly—and I had to fight to be named your guardian, as I was not the petitioner."

"So? And who asked to have me committed?"

"Johanna Darlington Seward, *et alia*—meaning your other three granddaughters, too."

"I see," Johann said slowly. "Jake, I owe you an apology."

Salomon snorted. "For what? How can you do or say anything calling for an apology when you are legally *non compos mentis*?"

"Whew! Hand me the traditional pinch of snuff; that was razor sharp. Dear little Johanna—I should have drowned her at birth. Her mother, my daughter Evelyn, used to shove her into my lap and remind me that she was my namesake. Jake, the only thing that brat ever did for me was to pee on my trousers—on purpose. So June and Marla and Elinor are in it, too. Not surprising."

"Johann, they darn near made it. I had to resort to everything short of treason to get it into Judge McCampbell's court. Even then, only the fact that I have held your general power of attorney for an unbroken fifteen years kept the court from naming Mrs. Seward as guardian and conservator. That and one other thing."

"What other thing?"

"Their stupidity. If they had shot for guardianship right off, they might have made it. Instead their first move was to try to have you declared legally dead."

"Well! Jake, do you suppose—later—that I can cut them out of my will entirely?"

"You can do better than that; you can outlive them. Now."

"Mmm, yes, I suppose I can. I will! It'll be a pleasure."

"That move wasn't serious, just stupid. Stupid lawyer. Took four days for the expert witnesses to unwind, took the court four minutes to rule in accordance with 'Estate of Parsons vs. Rhode Island.' Hoped I had seen the last of them then; that diploma-mill shyster seemed pretty cowed. Then

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Parkinson got into it . . . and *his* lawyer is *not* stupid."

"Parkinson? Our boy Parky, our idiot ex-director?"

"The same."

"Hmm. Von Ritter was right; it doesn't pay to humiliate a man. But how could Parky show an interest?"

"HE DIDN'T. That Parkinson put them up to it is simply a conclusion but a firm one—Parkinson's mother-in-law's lawyer and Parkinson himself present every day in court, a happy spectator. Johann, I didn't dare ask that the matter be continued during your recovery; our own expert witnesses were unwilling to testify that you would ever be yourself again, able to manage your own affairs. So we stipulated your temporary lack of competence—surprised 'em, caught 'em unprepared—and I had our attorney move that I be appointed your guardian pro tem. Made it. But, Johann, as soon as this was in the wind I started shuffling stock around. For several weeks Teal held a big chunk of your voting stock—Teal is okay; you made a good choice—Teal held all of your stock that I now hold, using money I lent him. An open transaction that could be verified, none of this 'ten dollars and other valuable considerations' dodge. During that period, your stock that I had sold to Teal, using my money plus Teal's stock that he already had, plus what I have long held, was voting control . . . because I knew that if I lost, the next day Parkinson would show up with proxies for your stock—signed by your granddaughters—and demand a stockholders meeting and kick me out of the chair and fire Teal as president. Yet I didn't dare buy stock from you myself—or I would go into court as an interested party and the other side might sniff it. It was touch-and-go for a while, Johann."

"Well, I'm glad we're out of the woods. Parky."

"We aren't. Other actions coming up, none of which you need worry about today."

"Jake, I'm not going to worry about *anything*. I'm going to think about birds and bees and fleecy clouds and enjoy the wonderful taste of Cream o' Wheat. And prunes, strained prunes fixed baby-style. I'm just glad to know that my oldest friend didn't knife me while I was unconscious and sorry as hell I thought so even for a moment. Oh, I still think you're a timid, gutless, stinking sissy not to help me out on this mirror nonsense but we'll argue that another day. I can wait if I have to; I see why you don't want to buck a psychiatrist if I have to go into court when I'm up and convince Judge McCampbell that I can still hit the floor with my hat."

"I'm glad to hear it. And I'm glad to see that you are getting well, Johann. I'm certain you are since you are again, or still, the same stinking bad-tempered, unreasonable old scoundrel you always were."

Johann chuckled. "Thanks, Jake—and I see that *you* are in good health, too. May we never see the day we talk sweet to each other. What else is new? Oh, yes! Where

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in hell is my secretary? Eunice, I mean. There is not a one of this gang of kidnappers around me who ever knew her . . . and they show no interest in trying to find her. Oh, Garcia knew her by sight—but he says he doesn't know where she is and claims he's too busy to run errands. Told me to ask you."

"Oh." Salomon hesitated. "Do you know her address?"

"Eh? Somewhere at the north end of town. I suppose my accountant has it. Wait a moment! You took her home once, I remember clearly."

"So I did. It was indeed somewhere in the north end. But those rabbit warrens all look alike. My guards may know. Hold it—*your* mobile guards escorted her for several months, right up to the time you went in for surgery. Have you asked them?"

"Hell, Jake, I haven't been allowed to see *anyone*. I don't even know that they are still working for me."

"I'm fairly sure they still were when I left for Europe. But, Johann, while we can ask them, I doubt if it will do any good."

"Why not?"

"Because I *did* see Eunice just before your operation. She was interested—she was fond of you, Johann, much more so than you deserved—"

"Conceded! Make it march."

"Well, she didn't mention specific plans but I don't think she intended to stay in secretarial work. Hell, man, none of us expected that you would ever *need* a secretary again. I would happily have hired her myself; she is a good secretary. But—"

"I'm sure you would, you old goat. But surely you let her know that she could stay on my payroll forever? Well, until I died, at least."

"She knew that. But she is a proud girl, Johann. Not a parasite. I'll make an effort to find her. However, if I don't, there are many good secretaries. I'll find one for you. That's a promise."

"Look, I don't want another secretary; I want Eunice Branca."

"I meant—"

"I know what you meant. You'd find me some old witch who does perfect work but is no fun to look at or have around . . . while you've probably got Eunice stashed away in your office."

SALOMON said slowly, "Johann, I swear by all that's holy that I do not have her in my office nor anywhere."

"Then she *did* turn you down. Jake, I trust you with my life and all my worldly goods. But I don't trust you or any man not to steal a perfect secretary if he can."

"*Nolo contendere*. I did offer her a job any time she wanted it. She did not accept."

"So we find her. *You* find her."

Salomon sighed. "What clues can you give me? Her husband, perhaps? Isn't he an artist?"

"I suppose you could call him that. Look, Jake, don't hold this against Eunice—but *I* would call him a gigolo. But I'm old-fashioned. I had to get a report when she married him. He was clean, no reason to lose the best secretary a

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man ever had just because she chose to marry him. Yes, he was an artist, one who didn't sell much; she supported him. That was *her* business; Branca was all right—didn't use drugs, didn't even drink. But he wasn't up to her. Illiterate. Surely I know how common that is today; I'm not prejudiced, I've got illiterates right in this house—and only God and Accounting know how many are working for Smith Enterprises. Branca may never have attended a school in which reading is taught. But I can give you one lead—if Eunice is not working as a secretary—easy to check through Social Security—and if they aren't on the Welfare rolls—she won't be, he might be—then check model agencies, video, artists, photographers, et cetera. For *both* of them. For he was as handsome as Eunice was beautiful; the snoopshot with the security report made that plain."

"Very well, Johann; I'll get a skiptrace firm on it."

"Hell, put a regiment of detectives on it!"

"But suppose they dropped out? People do."

Johann sniffed. "Perhaps he would—I would lay any amount that she never would. But, if necessary, I want every Abandoned Area in this city combed."

"Expensive. You send a private detective into an A.A. and the premium on his life goes sky high."

"Didn't you tell me that I have more money than I know what to do with?"

"True. But I don't relish hiring a man for hazardous work even if he wants the job. But we're borrowing trouble; it may take nothing more than getting Accounting to dig out that address. Or do a back check on a social security number with the customary small bribe. I'll let you know."

Salomon stood up to leave. Smith said, "Hold it. Will I see you tomorrow? And will you phone in a report—tell Hedrick or the physician on watch; they won't let me talk on the phone—phone a report each day? Till you find her?"

"Every day, Johann."

"Thanks, Jake. You'll make Eagle Scout yet. Tell nursy she can come out of the corner now. They're probably waiting to slip me my Mickey Finn—this is the longest they've let me stay awake so far."

TWO rooms away Salomon stopped to speak to Dr. Hedrick. The physician looked at him. "Rough," he stated.

"Quite. Doctor, how long do you expect to keep your patient from using a mirror?"

"Hard to say. Progress has been rapid lately . . . but Smith still has very imperfect control of the new body. Plus tingling and itching and numbness—all to be expected—and imaginary pains. Psychosomatic, rather; they are real to the patient. Counselor, if you expect me to have my patient ready for a competency hearing any time soon, emotional shocks must be delayed as long as possible. That's my opinion, though, of course, I am strongly influenced by Dr. Rosenthal's judgment. Besides imperfect

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body control, our patient is weak and emotionally extremely unstable."

"So I am aware."

"Mr. Salomon, you look as if you needed another tranquilizer. May I?"

Salomon grudged a smile. "Only if it involves grain alcohol."

Hedrick chuckled. "Will you settle for some bottled in Scotland?"

"Yes! No water. Well, just a touch."

"I'll dispense the drug, you add water to taste. I'll prescribe for myself, too—I also find this case a bit trying. Even though we are making medical history."

VIII

DR. GARCIA rubbed Jake Salomon's arm where he had just injected him. "Now wait three minutes. With a tenth cc of 'Tranquille' in you, you could attend your own hanging in a calm mood."

"Thank you, Doctor. Dr. Hedrick, what's bothering Johann now? Your message was not specific."

Hedrick shook his head. "The patient won't talk to us. Simply demands to see you."

"Uh . . . he has found out? Or, rather, if he has, what then?"

Hedrick turned to his colleague. "Dr. Garcia?"

"You know my opinion, Doctor. Your patient has recovered, is simply weak from being too long in bed. There is no longer any excuse—any *medical* excuse—for restraints."

"Dr. Rosenthal?"

The psychiatrist shrugged. "The human mind is a weird and wonderful thing—and the longer I study it the less I'm sure about anything concerning it. But I agree with Dr. Garcia on one point: You can't keep a patient tied down forever."

Hedrick said, "I'm afraid that's it, Counselor."

Salomon sighed. "And I've been appointed a volunteer."

"Any of us will go in with you if you wish, sir. But the patient flatly refuses to talk to *us*. We'll be standing by, ready to move fast if a crisis develops."

"The dummy-switches dodge again?"

"Oh, certainly. And this time the nurse has been instructed to get out if you tell her to. *You*, not the patient. But don't worry; I'll be watching and listening by closed-circuit video; Dr. Garcia and Dr. Rosenthal will watch the monitor 'scopes'."

"I'm not worrying, that drug must have hit me. Okay, I'll go in—and if I have to ride the tiger, I'll hang onto its ears."

JOHANN SMITH said, "Jake! Where the hell have you been? You've come to see me just once in the past three weeks. Once! Damn you."

"I've been working. Which is more than you can say."

"You think so, eh? Physiotherapy is damned hard work, harder than you ever do, you shyster—and I have to go through it seven days a week."

"My heart bleeds, Johann—

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want a chit to see the Chaplain? I was laid up sick for ten days—which I'm sure Hedrick told you—and I still don't feel chipper, so move over, you lazy bastard, and let me stretch out. Damn it, Johann, I'm not as young as I used to be; I can't jump through hoops every time you snap your fingers."

"Now, now, Jake, don't take that line with me. I'm sorry you were ill. I told 'em to send you flowers. Did you get them?"

"Yes. Thank you."

"That's odd, I didn't send any. Caught you, didn't I? Jake, I never intend to overwork a man—but, damn it, when he's on my payroll I expect to hear from him occasionally. And see him."

"I'm not on your payroll."

"Huh? What nonsense is this?"

"When the court appointed me your guardian pro tem and conservator, McCampbell awarded me a token fee of ten dollars a month. That's all I am allowed to accept from you—and I haven't collected it."

Johann looked incredulous. "Well, we'll change that in a hurry! You get word to Judge McCampbell that I said—"

"Stow it, Johann. It was part of the deal to shut up your granddaughters. Now what is eating you? Mrs. Branca? You've had a report each day—negative. I fetched a briefcase stuffed with detailed reports—all negative but showing what has been done. Want to read 'em? I see you have a reading machine now."

"Read negative reports? Jake, don't be silly. Yes, I'm fretted about Eunice—damn it, even if she didn't want to work for me any longer, you'd think she would have paid me the minimum courtesy of a sickroom visit. But that's not what is on my mind—not why I sent for you, I mean. Nurse!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Switch off the voice monitors, then go hide your head in the idiot box. Pick any program as long as it's loud; I want privacy."

"Yes, sir." She stood up and switched off the dummy switches.

"Nurse."

"Yes, Mr. Salomon?"

"Ask Dr. Hedrick if we can have full privacy. I don't think Mr. Smith is going to swing from the chandelier simply because I don't have a nursing degree."

"Mr. Salomon, Dr. Hedrick says that we are doing so well—" she smiled brightly—"aren't we, Mr. Smith?—that if you wanted to talk privately, I could leave. Just push this red button when you want me." She smiled again and left.

Johann said, "Well, that's a surprise!"

"Why so? You're getting well, Hedrick says so."

"Hmm. I fear the Greeks, even bearing gifts. Jake, come close, I want to whisper . . . because I wouldn't put it past 'em to have a spare microphone tucked away somewhere."

"Paranoia, you old fool. Why would Hedrick bother to listen to our conversation?"

"'Young fool,' please—I'm young again. Paranoid, possibly. Anyhow I don't want anybody to hear this but you. Because if I'm

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mistaken, it won't sound good to have this repeated in court in a competency hearing. So lean close and listen hard. Jake . . . *I'm almost certain this new body of mine is female*!"

Jake Salomon's ears started to buzz and he was glad that Garcia had given him that shot. "So? Interesting idea. If true, what are you going to do? Take it back to the complaint desk and demand another one?"

"Oh, don't talk like a fool, Jake. Whatever body I have now, I'm stuck with—and if it's female, well, it'll seem odd but half the human race manages to bear up under it; I guess I can. But don't you *see*? If my notion is correct, that's why they've taken such great care not to let me see myself. Afraid I would jump my cams, no doubt." Johann chuckled. "I'm tougher than that. Shucks, they haven't even let *you* see anything you could spot as female—sheet over my whole body, not even my arms in sight, and enough gear hooked to me to clutter up any lines of figure. Towel over my scalp—I suppose the hair is growing back, or such. If I'm horsefaced enough, you couldn't tell my sex just from my face. My new face."

"Perhaps. It's an interesting theory. How did you reach it?"

"Oh, a number of things. Especially the fact that, even though I now can use my hands and arms, they won't let me. Except during controlled physiotherapy. Can't *touch* myself, I mean; they strap me down again at once, with an excuse about 'spastic muscle action' and so forth. Which I did have at first and don't have now. But never mind. This is the first time there hasn't been a nurse in the room. So find out. Lift the sheet and look! Tell me, Jake, *am I male or female*? Hurry—she might come back."

Salomon sat still. "Johann."

"What, Jake? Hurry up, man!"

"You're female."

JOHANN SMITH was silent several moments, then said, "Well, it's a relief to be sure. At least I'm not crazy. If 'female' and 'crazy' aren't synonyms. Well, Jake? How did it happen?"

"I've known it all along, Johann. It's been a strain on me to see you and not let on. For you are correct; your doctors were afraid that you might not take it well. While you were still weak."

"They don't know me very well—it's not half the surprise it was to me when—at about six, it was—I found out that girls really *are* different from boys. Little girl down the block, it was. Showed me. But how did it happen, Jake? It wasn't what I signed up for."

"Oh, but it was."

"Eh?"

"No instruction you gave said one word about race or sex. You specified 'healthy,' and around twenty to forty years old, and with AB-Negative blood. Nothing else."

Johann blinked. "Yes. But it never occurred to me that they might put me into a woman's body."

"Why not? They put women's hearts into male bodies and vice versa every day."

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"True. I'm simply saying that I never thought about it. But even if I had, I don't think I would have risked cutting my chances in half by making such a restriction. As may be, I've never been one to cry over spilt milk. Well, now that I know, there's no reason to continue that silly business about no mirrors. Will you step out and tell that stubborn doctor that I want to see myself at once and no more nonsense? If necessary, knock his ears in."

"I'll see, Johann." Salomon buzzed for the nurse, then went out. He was gone five minutes, returned with Drs. Hedrick, Garcia and Rosenthal, and a second nurse, who was carrying a large hand mirror.

Hedrick said, "How do you feel, Miss Smith?"

She smiled wryly. "So it's 'Miss' Smith now, is it? Much better, thank you; my mind is at ease. You could have told me weeks ago; I am not as unstable as you think."

"That is possible, Miss Smith, but I am bound to do what I think is best for my patient."

"No criticism, none. But now that the cat is out of the bag, please ask the nurse to show me what I look like. I'm curious."

"Certainly, Miss Smith."

Dr. Garcia waved the nurse at the console aside and sat down; Hedrick stationed himself on one side of the bed, Rosenthal on the other. Only then did Hedrick take the mirror from the nurse, hold it to let his patient see herself in it.

Johann Smith looked at her new face first with intense interest, then with unbelief—then her features broke in horror. "Oh, my God! Dear God, what have they done to us? Jake! You *knew*!"

The lawyer's face was working in the convulsions of a strong man trying not to weep. "Yes, I knew, Johann. That's why I couldn't find her for you—*because she was here along*. Right here—and I had . . . to *talk* to her!" He gave up and sobbed.

"Jake, how could you let them do it? Eunice, oh Eunice my darling, forgive me—*I didn't know*!" Her sobs echoed his, an octave higher.

Hedrick snapped, "Dr. Garcia!"

"Started, Doctor!"

"Dr. Rosenthal, take care of Mr. Salomon. Nurse, help him, he's about to fall! Damn it, where's that aspirator?"

FIVE minutes later the room was quiet. The patient had been forced into sedated sleep. Dr. Hedrick satisfied himself that Miss Smith was safe and turned the bedside watch over to Dr. Garcia. Hedrick then left the sickroom.

He found Mr. Salomon stretched out on a couch at the remote watch station; Dr. Rosenthal was seated by the couch, a stethoscope around his neck. Hedrick cocked an eyebrow at the psychiatrist, who mouthed soundlessly, "Okay," then added aloud, "Perhaps you will check me."

"Very well, Doctor." Hedrick sat down where Rosenthal had been, hitched the chair closer, took Salomon's wrist and felt his pulse. "How do you feel?"

"I'm okay," Salomon said gruffly. "Sorry I made a fool of myself. How is *she*?"

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"Sleeping. You were fond of her."

"We *both* were fond of her. Doctor, she was an angel."

"Go ahead and cry. Tears are lubricant for the soul. Males would be better off if they cried as easily as women do. Eh, Rosenthal?"

"Correct, Doctor. Cultures in which men cry easily have little need of my specialty." He smiled. "Mr. Salomon, you're in good hands so I'll run along—got to shrink a few heads for my collection. Unless you need me, Doctor?"

"Run along, Rosy. You might be here in the morning when we wake the patient. Say ten o'clock."

"Good-bye, Dr. Rosenthal. Thank you. Thank you for everything."

"No huhu, Counselor. Don't let that veterinarian sell you any flea powder." He left.

"Mr. Salomon," said Hedrick, "this big castle is loaded with beds. What do you say to sacking out in one, then about twenty-one or -two o'clock I can give you a pill guaranteed to slug you for eight hours of dreamless sleep."

"I'm okay, really I am."

"If you say so. I can't force treatment on you. But as another human being who has come to know you fairly well—and admire you—I must admit that I am more worried about *you* than I am about my patient. You referred to her as an 'angel'—by which you meant the donor, not Miss Smith."

"Eh? Yes, of course. Eunice Branca." Salomon's features contorted momentarily.

"I never knew her and I've had little experience with angels; doctors don't see people at their best. But her body would do credit to an angel; I have never seen a healthier one. Twenty-eight years old by the records, physiologically perhaps five years younger. She—Miss Smith I now mean, Miss Johann Smith—can take a severe shock and bounce out of it; she has that superb young body to sustain her. But you have had much the same shock and—forgive me—are no longer young. If you won't sleep here—best—"

"I don't want to sleep *here*!"

"Very well. Second best would be for you to permit me to check your heart and lungs and blood pressure. If I don't like what I find, then I want you to rest while I send for your physician."

"He doesn't make house calls."

Hedrick grunted. "Then he's not a physician; physicians go where they are needed. A most unprofessional remark as we are expected to pretend that any M.D. with a license is a dedicated saint with the wisdom of Jove—even when we know he is a bungler whose dedication is to the Internal Revenue Service. Don't quote me; they might lift my union card. Now about that checkup? Do you want it?"

"Uh, yes. Please. And I'll take that pill if you'll let me take it home. Don't ordinarily use such —but tonight is a special case."

"Good. If you'll slip off your shirt—"

While he worked the physician said quietly, "Mr. Salomon, I don't have Dr. Rosenthal's training. But if it will do you any good

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to talk, I can listen. This has been on your mind, I know. I think your worst hurdle is past—letting Johann Smith know that he is now 'Miss' Smith, plus the still worse shock of seeing him—her—discover that she now inhabits his former secretary's body. So you are past that crisis. If there is more it would help to get off your mind, feel free to talk. In my profession as in yours, such talk is privileged."

"I don't mind talking about Eunice. But I don't know what to say."

"Well, you might tell me how such a lovely girl got killed. Never knew the donor's name until you told me. There was a privacy restriction. So we don't ask—as long as the donation is properly certified."

"Yes, there was such restriction. We'll never know why but I suspect that the child—woman, I mean, and a very competent one—but I thought of her as a child, being so much older than she was. I think Eunice had a romantic notion that she could give her body to her boss if she no longer needed it and not let him find out. Ridiculous, but it fitted her sweet nature. I had to tell *you*, once it looked as if old Johann might live through it. Because I knew he would blow his wig. And he did."

"A *very* good thing you told me, Counselor. I think—and Dr. Rosenthal thinks—that we would never have pulled this patient through if we hadn't taken extraordinary precautions to keep her from knowing her sex. In view of the patient's relation to the donor."

"CLOSE. Close for both of us. Doctor, I am not exaggerating—if I had been as little as twice Eunice's age—and she not married—I would have done my damnedest to marry her. And the same, I feel certain, goes for old Johann. So I knew what a shock it would be to him—worse than simply learning that she had been killed."

"Car accident?"

"Nothing so innocent. Killed by a mugger. Psychopath probably—but the point is immaterial as Johann's mobile guards caught him almost in the act and killed him. That's how she was saved—her body was saved, I mean—because they rushed her to a hospital hoping to save her." Jake Salomon sighed. "It does help to talk."

"Good. How did Johann Smith's guards happen to be so Johnny-on-the-spot, yet not quite?"

"Oh. The poor darling tried to save ten minutes. She was a blood donor—AB-Negative—and—"

"*Oh*! Now I know why 'Miss' Smith has seemed vaguely familiar. I saw her once, I'm now certain, giving blood to a patient I had been called in to support. A lovely girl, with a warm disposition, friendly, who dressed in, um, exotic styles."

"Erotic styles you mean, let's not use euphemisms. Yes, Eunice did. She knew she was beautiful and did not mind sharing her beauty. Played up to it."

"I wish I had known her."

"I wish you had, Doctor; your life would have been richer thereby. If she had a call to give blood, Johann's guards were under orders to driver her. Protect her. Pick her

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up at her door, escort her to the car, deliver her, wait for her. But this was an emergency and she lives—lived—nineteen levels up in one of those beehives in the north end. Vehicle lift, sure—but not able to lift the sort of armor Johann owned. Owns. So the poor darling decided to save ten minutes and used the passenger elevator without waiting for escort. And that's where she was jumped. Killed."

"A pity. I suppose she didn't know that we can always stretch a patient an extra ten minutes if we know a donor is on the way."

"Maybe she did, maybe she didn't—but it is characteristic of Eunice Branca that she tried to hurry."

"A pity. You can put your shirt on. How old did you say you were?"

"I didn't say. Seventy-two is staring me in the face."

"I'm amazed. You seem to be younger—internally I mean, not necessarily your face—"

"So I'm ugly. I know it."

"I think 'distinguished' is the accepted term. You seem much younger, physiologically. Say twenty years."

"So I take my hormones."

"I'm not sure you need them. Go home if you wish. Or stay. If you stay, I'd like to put a monitor on your heart. Professional interest." (And to make damn sure you don't conk out, old fellow—sometimes a heart stops for no good reason after a shock such as you have had.)

"Uh . . . I *am* tired. Could I skip dinner and go straight to bed? With maybe a twelve-hour dose instead of eight?"

"No trouble."

Soon Jake Salomon was in bed and asleep. Hedrick ate, looked in on his patient, left orders with the night watch to call him if the displays exceeded certain tolerances, went to bed and to sleep; he never needed the drugs he prescribed.

Despite sedation, Johann Smith's dreams were troubled. Once the old man in the borrowed skull muttered, "Eunice?" (I'm here, Boss. Go back to sleep.) "All right, my dear. Just wanted to know where you'd gone." (Quit fretting, Boss. I'm *here*.) Johann smiled in his sleep and then slept quietly, no more bad dreams.

THE morning nurse bustled in with a tray. "Good morning, Miss Smith! How are we today?"

"I don't know how you are, but I'm hungry."

"Good! Hot oatmeal this morning, dear, and orange juice and a boiled egg—and we'll soak a little toast in egg so that it will go down easily. I'm going to tilt the bed up a touch."

"Mrs. Sloan—"

"Yes? Let me tuck the napkin under your chin."

"Stop that, or I'll tell you where to tuck it! Uncover me and unstrap me; I'm going to feed myself." (Boss, don't be rude to her. She's trying to help you.) *(Eunice?)* (Of course, dear—didn't I promise I wouldn't leave you again?) (But—) (Shush, she's talking.)

"Now, Miss Smith, you *know* I can't do that. Please, dear. Doesn't this smell good?"

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"Uh . . . I suppose you can't unstrap me without Dr. Hedrick's permission. I'm sorry I snapped at you." (That's better, Boss!) "But don't try to feed me, please don't. Instead please find Dr. Hedrick and tell him I'm being difficult again. You might also tell him that, if he doesn't want to go along with my unreasonable demands, he had better try to reach Mr. Salomon. Because if anyone tries to put food in my mouth while my hands are strapped, I'll do my best to spit it on the ceiling." (Is that better, Eunice?) (Some, Boss. Say ten percent.) (Uh, darn, I don't have any *practice* in being a lady.) (I'll teach you, Boss.) (Eunice, are you really there, dear? Or have I come unstuck just as they thought I would?) (Discuss it later, Boss dear—you're going to have to face the doctor right away . . . and *don't* mention *me* . . . or you know what'll happen. They'll *never* unstrap our wrists. You know that, don't you.) (Of course I do! Think I'm crazy?) (Irrelevant and immaterial as Jake would say. The point is never to let Dr. Hedrick—or *anybody*—guess that I'm here . . . or they'll be *certain* you're crazy. Now I'm going to shut up.) (Don't go 'way!) (Boss, I'll *never* go away; I'll just keep quiet. You and I had better talk mostly when others aren't around. Unless I see you about to make a mistake.) (Going to nag me, huh?) Johann heard her merry giggle. (Haven't I always, Boss? Watch it; here come the cops.)

Dr. Hedrick came in, followed by Dr. Garcia. "Good morning, Miss Smith."

"Good morning, gentlemen." The patient nodded at them.

"Nurse says that you would like to try feeding yourself."

"That's true but that's not all of it. I want these straps and clamps removed, all of them."

"Letting you feed yourself is no problem. It's a good idea, good practice. As for the rest— That calls for thought."

"Doctor, the masquerade is over. If you can't see your way clear to removing all restraints from my body, then forget about breakfast; I won't starve. Get my lawyer instead."

"As it happens, Mr. Salomon is in the house—"

"Then get him!"

"Just a moment, please." Dr. Hedrick glanced at Dr. Garcia, who had seated himself at the console; Dr. Garcia nodded. "Miss Smith, would you agree to a reasonable compromise? Or at least listen?"

"I'll listen. But—" (Shut up, Boss!) "I'll listen, Doctor."

"Mr. Salomon is, as you know, an elderly man, and he had a trying day yesterday. I persuaded him to stay overnight, and rest. I'm told that he is just getting up; he has not had breakfast. I have and so has Dr. Garcia—but so long ago that we could use a bit of brunch. Now I can unstrap your arms, let you feed yourself—but unstrapping your pelvis . . . well, as you must have guessed, there is some odd plumbing down there, and other things. Takes time to unhitch everything.

"So here is my thought. You can invite Mr. Salomon to join

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you for breakfast . . . and you could invite us, too, for that bit of brunch—and we four can talk over what needs to be done next. I shall follow the wishes of your guar—your lawyer. Or let him select another physician and withdraw, if I find that I must."

"My guardian," Johann said quietly. "We'll do whatever my guardian requires. But I hope he does not decide to replace you, Dr. Hedrick. I have been a difficult patient and I'm sorry. I know what a miraculous job you have done on me . . . and I am grateful."

"Thank you, Miss Smith."

"I would be delighted to have you three gentlemen join me for brunch . . . if you will be so kind as to unstrap my arms."

(Boss!) (What's biting you, little one? I thought I was being a perfect lady?) (You are—*but don't you dare let gentlemen in here to eat with us until we're made pretty!* Not a speck of makeup, and our hair must be a mess. Horrid!) (But look, dear, it's just Jake and our doctors.) (It's the principle of the thing. I know more about being a girl than you do—well, don't I? When did I *ever* come to work with my face stark naked and my hair in rats? Why, I often got up much earlier than I had to, just to make sure that I was as pretty as possible, just for you. Didn't I? Did I not?)

"A PAIN, Miss Smith?"

"Eh? I mean, 'Oh?' Sorry, Doctor, just thinking. If I am to have gentlemen guests for breakfast, shouldn't I start practicing how to be a lady? It's new to me, you know. Do I have any makeup on?"

Hedrick looked startled. "Do you mean lipstick?"

"Whatever it is that ladies put on their faces; I'm sure it's always more than lipstick. And my hair should be brushed. Or do I have hair?"

"Why, certainly you have. Still short but a fine, healthy growth."

"That's a relief. I thought possibly I had a plastic skull and would have to wear wigs."

"There was some prosthetic restoration. But Dr. Boyle managed to save the scalp and you'll never notice the prosthesis." Hedrick smiled briefly. "Tougher than natural bone. With good blood supply to your scalp and normal hair—just hasn't grown out very far."

"I'm relieved. Dandruff?"

"Haven't noticed any."

"We won't worry about it this morning. Doctor, I'd like to be made up to look like a lady ready to receive guests. If you'll have one of the servants take in a cup of coffee and some orange juice to Mr. Salomon along with our invitation to breakfast, I'm sure he won't mind waiting." (How'm I doing, Eunice?) (Fine, old dear!)

Dr. Hedrick looked puzzled. "Miss Smith, when I set up a support team, I try to anticipate every possible emergency, supplies, drugs, and so forth. This is the first time I've been asked to produce lipstick. And cosmetics."

"Oh. But you're not being asked to, Doctor. The ladies' powder room on the first floor is stocked with all shades of lipstick and many cosmetics. Should be. Was.

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Should still be, or someone will hear about it. And one of the nurses can help me. That pretty redhead—Minnie? Ginny? Miss Gersten, I mean. She must know quite a lot about cosmetics." (She does—that red hair came out of a bottle, Boss.) (Mee*ow*! Shut up, pussy cat.) (Wasn't being catty, Boss. She does well, in spite of those godawful uniforms.)

"Winifred Gersten," said Dr. Garcia. "Nurse, find Winnie. And take that tray out; it's cold."

Forty minutes later Miss Johann Smith was ready to receive. Her hair was fluffed, her face had been made up with restrained boldness by the red-haired nurse, and the result as shown in a mirror had been approved by the second voice inside Smith—grudgingly, it seemed to Johann—(I can do better. It'll do for now).

The bed had been contoured to let her sit up and from somewhere a smart bed jacket had been produced, one that matched her eyes. Best of all, her hands and arms were free.

Johann found that her hands were trembling. She attributed it to excitement and decided that, if she had trouble controlling a fork, she would stick to things that would not slop on her jacket—besides, she was not hungry now. Too excited.

(Steady down, Boss, darling. Leave the eating to me.)

(But—)

(No 'buts.' I've been feeding that face for years. The body remembers, Boss. You talk to the gentlemen; I'll handle the calories. Now let's shut up; they're arriving.)

"May we come in?"

"Do, gentlemen, please. Good morning, Jake. I hope you had a good night's rest." (Put out your hand to him, Boss.)

"Slept like a child."

"Good. So did I." Johann extended her left arm and hand, that being the side the lawyer was on. "Look, Jake! Hands!"

Salomon took her hand, bowed over it—hesitated and then touched it to his lips. Johann was so amazed that the hand was almost snatched back. (Good God! What does Jake think I am? A pansy?) (He thinks you're a beautiful girl. You are. I should know. Look, Boss, we must talk about Jake—later. Say hello to your shrink.)

DR. ROSENTHAL was saying, "I'm a party-crasher. May I come in, Miss Smith?"

"You're most welcome. Someone is going to have to assure these other gentlemen that I don't have termites in the attic; I'm depending on you, Doctor."

The psychiatrist smiled down at her. "That is an appeal hard to resist. I must say your improvement since yesterday is astounding. You're looking lovely—Miss Smith."

Johann smiled and gave him her hand. Dr. Rosenthal bowed over it and kissed it—not a quick and frightened peck such as Salomon had given it, but a kiss that was soft and warm and unhurriedly sensuous. Johann felt a tingle run up her arm. (Hey, what is this?) (Stay off his couch, Boss. He's a wolf—I can tell.)

When he straightened up he held

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her hand a moment longer than necessary, smiled at her again, then moved away. Johann thought of asking him if that was his standard way of treating patients, decided not to—but felt slightly annoyed that the other two doctors had not offered the same homage. Yonny Schmidt had been born at a time and place where hand-kissing was unheard of; Johann Smith had never taken it up; Miss Johann Smith was discovering that the silly custom was habit-forming. She felt flustered.

She was saved by another voice from the door, that of her butler. "May we serve now, Miss Smith?"

"Cunningham! It's good to see you. Yes, you may serve." Johann wondered who had given instructions to make the meal formal?

The butler stared over her head and said tonelessly, "Thank you, Miss." Johann was startled. The butler, like all the male household staff (and some of the females), was sudden death armed or unarmed; his manner alone could intimidate news snoops. (The poor man is scared!) (Of course. So calm him down, Boss.)

"But first come here, Cunningham."

"Yes, Miss." Her household chief walked carefully toward her, stopped a very respectful distance away.

"Oh, do come closer. Look at me. Right at me, don't turn your eyes away. Cunningham, the way I look is a shock to you. Isn't it?"

Cunningham swallowed without speaking; his Adam's apple bobbed.

"Oh, come now," Johann said firmly. "Of course it is. But if it upsets you, think what a shock it is to *me*. Until yesterday I didn't even *know* that I had been turned into a woman. I'll have to get used to it and so will you. Just remember this: Underneath I am the same cantankerous, unreasonable, unappreciative old scoundrel who hired you as a guard-footman nineteen years ago. I'll go on expecting perfect service, notice it as little, and remember to say 'thank you' as seldom. Do we understand each other?"

The butler barely smiled. "Yes, sir—I mean 'Yes, Miss.' "

"You meant 'Yes, sir' but you're going to have to learn to call me 'Yes, Miss' and I'm going to have to learn to expect it. We old dogs must learn new tricks. How's your wife's lumbago?"

"Some better, she says. Thank you, Miss."

"Good. Tell Mary I asked. You may serve."

The brunch was almost merry. Johann tasted the wine when Cunningham offered a sample, approved it but declined a glass herself. She barely touched it to her tongue but the flavor spread like strong brandy and she had been startled almost into choking by the vibrant wonder of its bouquet. Yet the bottle she recognized as that of an adequate but not spectacular Chablis. She played safe with orange juice.

Table talk was lively and directed mostly at the hostess with no reference to her status as a patient. The men seemed to vie for her attention—and Johann found that she enjoyed it. She laughed

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frequently, answered their sallies and felt witty herself.

But she could see that Jake was not eating much and looked at her all the time except when she looked back . . . at which his gaze wavered and shifted. Poor Jake. (Eunice, what are we going to do about Jake?) (Later, Boss—one thing at a time.)

She was startled again when Cunningham came to remove her plate from her lap table—startled to see that scrambled eggs and two rolls had disappeared as well as orange juice, half a glass of milk and one of three link sausages. "Coffee, Miss?"

"I don't know. Dr. Hedrick, am I allowed coffee?"

"Miss Smith, now that you can eat sitting up, there is no reason why you should not eat or drink anything you want."

"Then I'll celebrate. The first coffee I've been permitted in ten years— Demi-tasse for me, Cunningham, but man-size cups for the gentlemen. And Cunningham? Is there any Mumm '97 on ice?"

"Certainly, Miss."

"Serve it." She raised her voice a little. "Any sissies who won't drink champagne this early in the day may sneak out quietly."

No one left. When glasses were filled and bubbles were chasing up their stems, Dr. Hedrick stood up. "Gentlemen, a toast—" He waited until they were standing. Johann raised her glass with them.

But did not drink: the toast was "To our lovely and gracious hostess—long may she live!"

"Amen!"

"Cheers!"

And the tinkle of breaking glass.

Johann felt tears, ignored them. "Thank you, gentlemen. Cunningham, fresh glasses."

When they were filled she said, "Gentlemen, I ask for another standing toast—" she waited, then went on—"this should be to Dr. Boyle . . . and to you, Jake, old friend, without whose loyal help I would not be here . . . and certainly to you, Dr. Hedrick, and to all the doctors who have helped you and helped Dr. Boyle . . . and to all the patient nurses I have snapped at. But those can wait. I ask you to drink—" her tears were falling and her voice was almost a whisper—"to the memory of the sweetest, loveliest and most gallant girl I have ever known . . . Eunice Branca."

THE toast was drunk in silence. Then Jake Salomon slowly crumpled into his chair and covered his face with his hands.

Dr. Hedrick jumped to help him. Dr. Garcia was quick on the other side. Johann stared in helpless distress. (Oh, I should have known better! But I meant it, darling, I meant every word.) (I know you did, Boss, and I appreciate it. But it's all right. Jake has got to admit that I'm dead. And so do you.) (Are you dead, Eunice? *Are you?*) (Don't worry over a word, Boss. I'm here and I won't leave you, ever. I promised you. Have you ever known me to break my word?) (No, never.) (So believe me this time. But we've got to take care of Jake.) (How, dearest girl?) (When the time comes, you'll know. Talk later, when we're alone.)

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Dr. Rosenthal was leaning over her. "Are you all right, my dear?"

"I'm okay—just terribly sorry about Mr. Salomon. Is *he* all right?"

"He will be, shortly. Miss Smith, don't worry about Mr. Salomon. Yes, you brought on another catharsis—which he needed, or he would not have had it. As for his physical well-being, he's in Dr. Hedrick's hands . . . and Curt Hedrick hasn't lost a patient he reached in time since he started practicing his specialty. Your house is loaded with everything Dr. Hedrick could possibly need . . . and Mr. Salomon isn't even ill. He simply needs to lie down, plus a happy drug."

Dr. Rosenthal sat with her while the room was cleared of dishes, brunch table, dining chairs, etc. Dr. Hedrick returned with Dr. Garcia. Johann again asked, "How is he?"

"Half asleep. Slightly ashamed of being a 'spectacle' and a 'nuisance'—his terms. But only slightly as what I gave him doesn't permit such self-hate very long. How are *you*?"

"She's ready to go six rounds,' Rosenthal assured him.

"So the 'scopes say. We might as well get on with our conference, Miss Smith. I discussed all that I am going to say with Mr. Salomon while you were getting pretty before brunch, and he approves. I am withdrawing from your case."

"Oh, Dr. Hedrick! *No!*"

"Yes. Dear lady, ain't nobody going away mad. This means that you are well. *Well.* Oh, still weak, still in need of care. But I'm not deserting you, I'm turning you over to Dr. Garcia."

She looked at Dr. Garcia, who nodded. "Nothing to worry about, Miss Smith."

"But—Doctor Hedrick, you will come back and see me? Won't you?"

"Delighted to. But not very soon, I'm afraid. You see—well, there is an interesting transplant case which has been hanging fire. A radical one, the heart and both lungs. Now they are ready to start surgery. I received a call before you were awake, asking if I would be available. I said that I would have to call back—and after I saw you I did call and said that I could do it. After consulting Dr. Garcia, of course, and notifying Mr. Salomon." He smiled quickly. "So, if you will excuse me, I'll leave."

Johann sighed and reached out her hand. "Since you must."

Hedrick took her hand, bent over it; Dr. Rosenthal said lazily, "Aren't you going to scrub first, Doctor?"

Hedrick said, "You go to hell, Rosy!" and kissed her hand.

IT SEEMED to Johann that Dr. Hedrick stretched it at least twice as long as Dr. Rosenthal's earlier effort. She felt goose pimples on her arm and a most curious feeling at her middle—yes, she decided, if one had to be a woman, this was a custom to be encouraged.

(Going to lay him, Boss?) (Eunice!) (Oh, piffle, Boss. We're Siamese twins now and should be honest with each other. *You* wanted to lay *me* for years. But couldn't. You knew you wanted to, I knew it too; we just never talked about it. Now you still can't. But

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you can lay *him* if you want to . . . and it's the best way to say 'Thank you.' But watch it, dearie. Do it here, not where you might get caught. He has a jealous wife; he has all the signs.) (Eunice, I'm not going to discuss such a ridiculous idea! I'm surprised at you. You, a nice girl—and married yourself.) (Wups, dearie! I'm not married. 'Until death do us part' is the limit . . .and I'm a ghost. 'Minds me, though—my husband—erase and correct; my widower, Joe Branca. Got to talk about *him*, too. Doc's turning to go. So wet your lips and smile, if you have it even faintly on your mind. And you *have*.)

Miss Smith wet her lips and smiled. "Adios, Doctor, not goodbye. Hurry back. When you can." (You're learning, dearie, you're learning.)

Dr. Garcia said, "Miss Smith—"

"Oh. Yes, Doctor?"

"If you're ready, I'll get nurses in and we'll unharness you and several other things. You can have a general anesthetic if you wish. I suggest locals, with a chin screen to keep you from seeing how I'm bungling it. With something you want to read projected, and some music."

"Music would be nice. But I won't read, I'm too interested. Locals, then. Or nothing, pain doesn't upset me."

"But it upsets me, so we'll use local anesthesia."

For an hour and more she listened to a tape of evergreens, from classic rock she had never grown used to clear back to folk music popular before Johann Schmidt was born. Mostly she enjoyed lazily the sensuous pleasure of feeling her body being touched and handled and manipulated. Not only was it wonderful to *have* a body after days of complete paralysis from the neck down (plus fear of being forever a basket case, a fear Johann had never fully admitted) but also, most important, this body felt everything so sensitively—just to be touched was pleasure.

Not much like that old wreck you discarded! For the past ten, fifteen years that body's sole virtue had been that it still ran. It reminded her of a fifth-hand Model-T Ford that he and four other young cake-eaters had bought for seventy dollars in Baltimore and had driven half across the continent—no lights, no brakes (the reverse had to serve), no driving licenses (unheard of), no instruments, no nothing. But the tough and ugly little touring car had chugged along on three cylinders (not always the same three) at a (estimated) top speed of twenty-five miles an hour. They had stopped now and then to throw water on the spokes to keep them from falling out.

Somewhere on a dirt road in Missouri it had coughed and quit, and smell had traced the trouble to the wiring. Yonny had fixed it—wrapped the burned insulation with toilet paper, tied it with string . . . cranked the heap and it had started at once and chugged along as before.

She wondered where that sturdy old junkpile had wound up? And what had become of her male body? Johann's will had left it to a

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medical school—but since Johann hadn't died, quite, that will did not control. Had they pickled it? Or swept it out with the trash? Must ask.

SEVERAL times she felt pulling sensations that should have hurt but did not and once a sharp pain which she ignored. There were odors, sour-sweet and nauseating; she thought of suggesting that the air system be turned up, then decided to mind her own business. Presently the odors were gone and she became aware that she was being given a bed bath, then sheets and pad were being changed.

The chin screen was removed; the top part of the fresh bottom sheet was whisked into place by two nurses while a third lifted Miss Smith's shoulders. Two nurses left the room, carrying a hamper between them. "There," said Dr. Garcia. "That wasn't so bad, was it?"

"Not at all. I feel grand." She wiggled her toes, opened and closed her thighs. "Grand! Now I'm *me* all over—free! Doctor? Since I'm no longer wired for sight and sound, not to mention plumbing, do we need this fancy hospital bed? I would stop feeling like an invalid sooner if I had my own bed."

"Mmm . . . must you rush it? This bed is the right height for nurses to work on you—back rubs and such—and it has side rails which can be raised when you sleep. Miss Smith, every nurse's nightmare is the thought of a patient falling out of bed."

"Well! What do you think I am? A baby?"

"Yes, Miss, that's what I think you are. A baby getting acquainted with its body. Babies can fall. But I don't intend to let you fall. Either out of bed, or in learning to walk. Or in taking a tub bath, which you will be demanding almost at once."

(Play it cool, Boss!) "Doctor, I will follow your orders. But my own bed has its points. It will contour, just touch a button. And it has hydraulic lift. Raises as high as this one or higher—but will also lower till it's hardly more than a mattress on the floor, ten inches high. Will this one do that?"

"Mmm, no."

"I *did* fall out of bed, ten years back. It shook me up so, that I ordered this special bed. Back when I was still walking I used to raise it to the easiest height—about at my hips—to get into it. Then lower it all the way down to sleep."

"Mmm . . . maybe we can make a deal. Will you promise me *always* to lower the bed once you get into it? Even if you don't intend to sleep."

She smiled. "Signed and witnessed and with posted performance bond."

"I don't think we need to go that far. Miss Smith, we no longer need to monitor you the forty-'leven ways we've been doing. But I want a continuous check on heart action and respiration until you are living a normal life. That's the main reason I need this life-support bed. But if you will let me fasten to your skin, anywhere on your ribs, a little pickup-transmitter weighing a half-ounce and no bigger than an alloy dollar, we won't need this

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fancy bed. It's comfortable, you'll forget it's on you. You can bathe with it in place—waterproof and sticks like a poor relation."

She smiled. "Start sticking!"

"I'll fetch it. And have the nurses swap beds."

"Oh, the nurses can't move my bed. It takes big huskies and a power dolly. Tell Cunningham. But no rush. Speaking of nurses—Winnie, don't you need to wash your hands or something? I want to talk to my doctor."

The redhead smiled at her. "Dear, I've heard everything. Don't mind me."

"Look, Winnie, you did a lovely job on my face when I did not know how. But that's the point, dear. Outside I'm a woman. But up here back of my eyes is still a crabby old man who is far too shy—chicken, I mean—too chicken to discuss intimate matters with a pretty girl present. And I *must*."

"Miss Gersten, go to the watch station and take a break. I'll call you."

"Yes, Doctor."

Once she was gone Johann said, "You're durn sure all the mikes are dead?"

"We're private, Miss Smith."

"Call me 'Johann,' Doc; this has got to be man-to-man—and embarrasses me even discussing it with a man. All right, first question: Did I come sick—menstruate—in the last few days?"

Garcia looked surprised. "You twigged? Yes, you are just over your period; we removed a tampon while we were working on you and it was not necessary to replace it. But where did I miss? I thought I had anticipated it and had bolshoi painkiller in you in time. You felt cramps?"

"Not a twinge. But things didn't *feel* right . . . and that's when I started getting suspicious about my sex." She looked thoughtful. "Perhaps it was the tampons—I felt something odd down there—and now the feeling is no longer there."

"Might have been that. I would have used napkin pads, usual hospital practice. But there were just too many bells and whistles—plumbing I mean—in the way. I didn't think you would notice a tampon placed while you were sedated. Contrary to popular belief there is almost no sensation inside a vagina."

"So? There damn well is in *mine!* I just didn't know what the sensation was."

"Well, the matter has never come up before; your case is unique. Was that all that was troubling you, Miss—sorry! Johann."

"No. This new body of mine—Has it had a whatchamacallit, a female examination?"

"Oh, certainly. Dr. Kystra, best G-Y-N man in town. Done while you were paralyzed, checked again after your spinal cord fused but done while you were in deep sedation. All okay."

"I want a full report. Damn it, Doc, I'm in charge of this body now . . . and I know as little about how to be female as my Grossmutter knew about aircraft. Nothing, that is."

"I can get the report out of file if you want it—"

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"I do!"

"—but I can tell it in terms you are more likely to understand. Shall I?"

"Go ahead."

"YOU have a normal female body, physiological age circa twenty-five—calendar age somewhat older, I understand. Breasts normal virginal—which doesn't mean your body is *virgo intacta*; it isn't. Just means you haven't suckled a child. No trace of abdominal surgery, from which I conclude that your appendix is in place and your tubes are intact—"

"Meaning I could get pregnant."

"—the latter opinion having been confirmed by insufflation while you were paralyzed. You not only *could* get pregnant; you *will*. Unless you live an absolutely chaste life—and even if you plan to, I would still recommend precautionary contraception—say six-month implants in one buttock. The best-laid plans of mice and men, you know. And women. Especially women. Since you are Rh-negative about six-sevenths of the male population could give you a damaged or stillborn child. We can prevent that if we know it in time, but an unexpected pregnancy can turn out tragically. So don't let it be unexpected. Plan it. In the meantime use contraception."

"Doc, what makes you so damn sure I'll get pregnant? Even if I get married—which I do not plan on—hell, I've had only hours to get used to the notion of being female; I certainly haven't had time to consider being *actively* female. But even so, as the old gal said, 'Shucks, honey, hundred and hundreds of times ain't nothing happen a-tall.' "

"If you adjust normally to being a young female, you *will* be active about it, that's why. Or you will eventually wind up on Dr. Rosenthal's confession couch or some emotional equivalent, such as joining a nunnery. Johann, your new body has a normal female hormonal balance; you had better plan accordingly. Even getting your tubes cut is no answer; you might come down with the emotional never-get-overs through regretting it. As for what the old gal said, it doesn't apply. Because of that child you've already had."

"*What?*" (Boss, why didn't you mind your own business? I could have told you all of this you need to know.) (Shut up, Eunice.)

Garcia looked surprised. "You didn't know? I had assumed that, since this body was that of your secretary, you knew that she had had a child. Or children."

"Not only didn't know it, I don't believe it." Surely the security investigation would have turned up such an obvious fact . . . and God knows Eunice had never been out of his sight since then long enough to bear a child.

"I'm afraid you will have to believe it, uh, Johann. Striations called stretch marks on belly and buttocks—hardly noticeable unless your skin is tanned and then easily concealed by cosmetics. But present. Not definitive, as a woman, or even a male, can get stretch marks from obesity. But characteristic. But the thing that nails it down is that the cervix of a virgin

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womb does *not* look like that of a woman who has borne a child. The difference is so marked that a layman can spot it. I have seen yours. Q.E.D. Could be photographed if you doubt me."

(Drop it, Boss!)

"Oh, I believe you, now that you've explained it."

"A comparison photo might be a good idea. Make you more careful. I was not implying any criticism of Mrs. Branca; I was simply warning you that the baby-baking apparatus you inherited from her is in prime shape and ready to be triggered each lunar month. Say about ten days from now."

"I'll be careful."

"Want a lecture on contraception?"

"No." Johann smiled wryly. "Apparently I have at least a week before I need a chastity girdle."

"Approximately, by statistics. But, uh, Johann. No, Miss Smith—do you know the technical term we physicians use to describe girls who depend on rhythm?"

"No. What?"

"We call them 'mothers.' "

"Oh, *Oh!*"

"So don't wait too long. Next question?"

"Uh . . . no more today, Doctor; I need to digest what you've told me. Thank you."

"Not at all, Miss Smith. Shall I have them switch beds now?"

"I'll send for Cunningham later; I'd like to rest. Doctor? Could you stick that dingus on my ribs? Then have the nurses stay out a couple of hours?"

"Certainly. If you'll let me raise the safety rails, as this bed is *not* only ten inches from the floor."

"Oh, of course."

TO BE CONTINUED

ASBESTOS, TOO

(Continued from page 2)

pendently sets forth something to think about.

You don't have to like these two visions—Silverberg especially does not enjoy his—but now might be as good a time as any to ask yourself whether you truly think our technology can reverse itself—and if so, how?

Technical man is in danger, clearly. Internal combustion engines—autos, buses and trucks—account for 75% of carbon monoxide pollution nationally and CO is pure poison. Our urban centers today contain levels of it up to four times a "safe" one. Production of electricity right now uses 10% of the nation's annual water run-off thermally to pollute our rivers—and the figure is expected to rise to 50% in the next thirty years. A herbicide in recent use here—2, 4, 5-T—has become a weapon of war in Vietnam, according to *The New York Times*. Phosphates in household detergents are killing our lakes.

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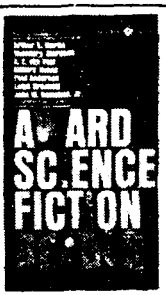

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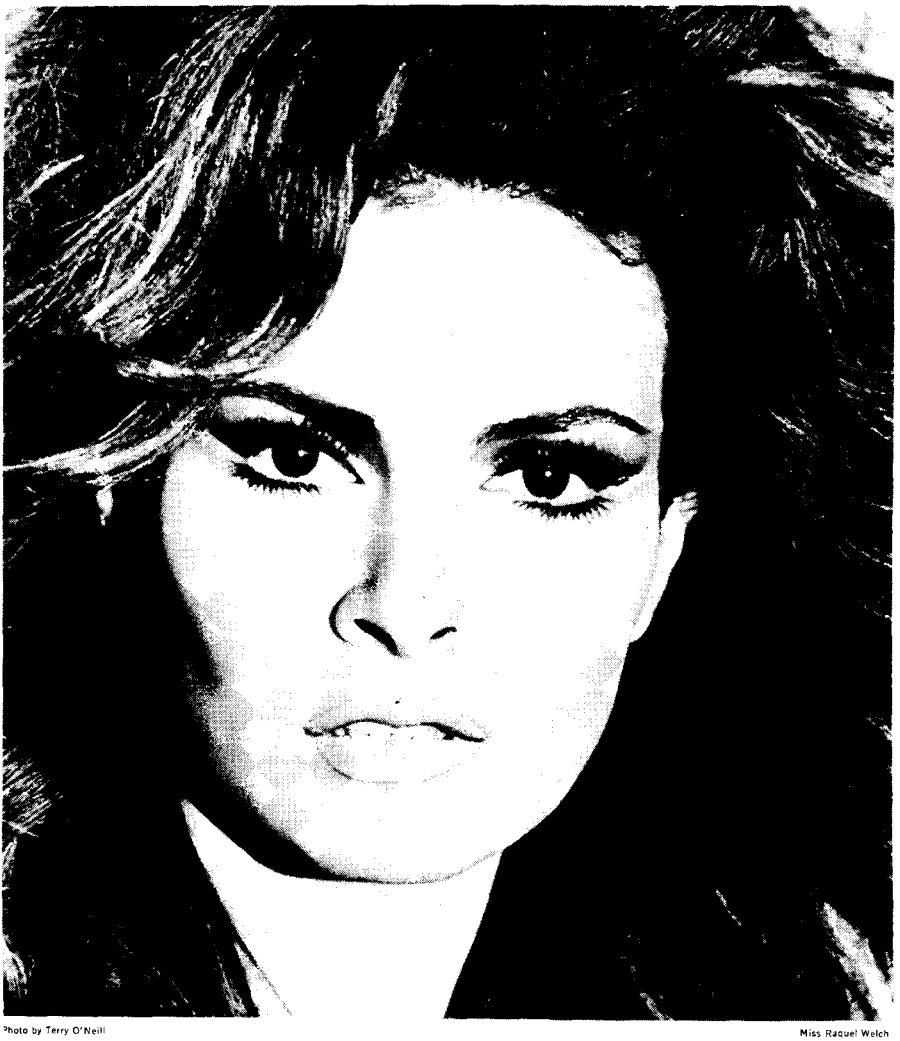

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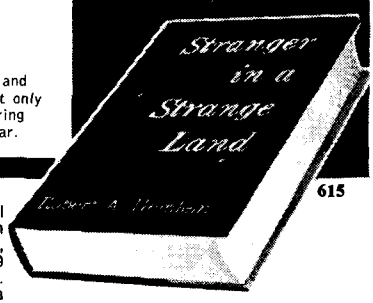

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